James Tobin on Reagan's Nostrums • A Talk With Toni Morrison
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

March 21, 1981 Price $1.25

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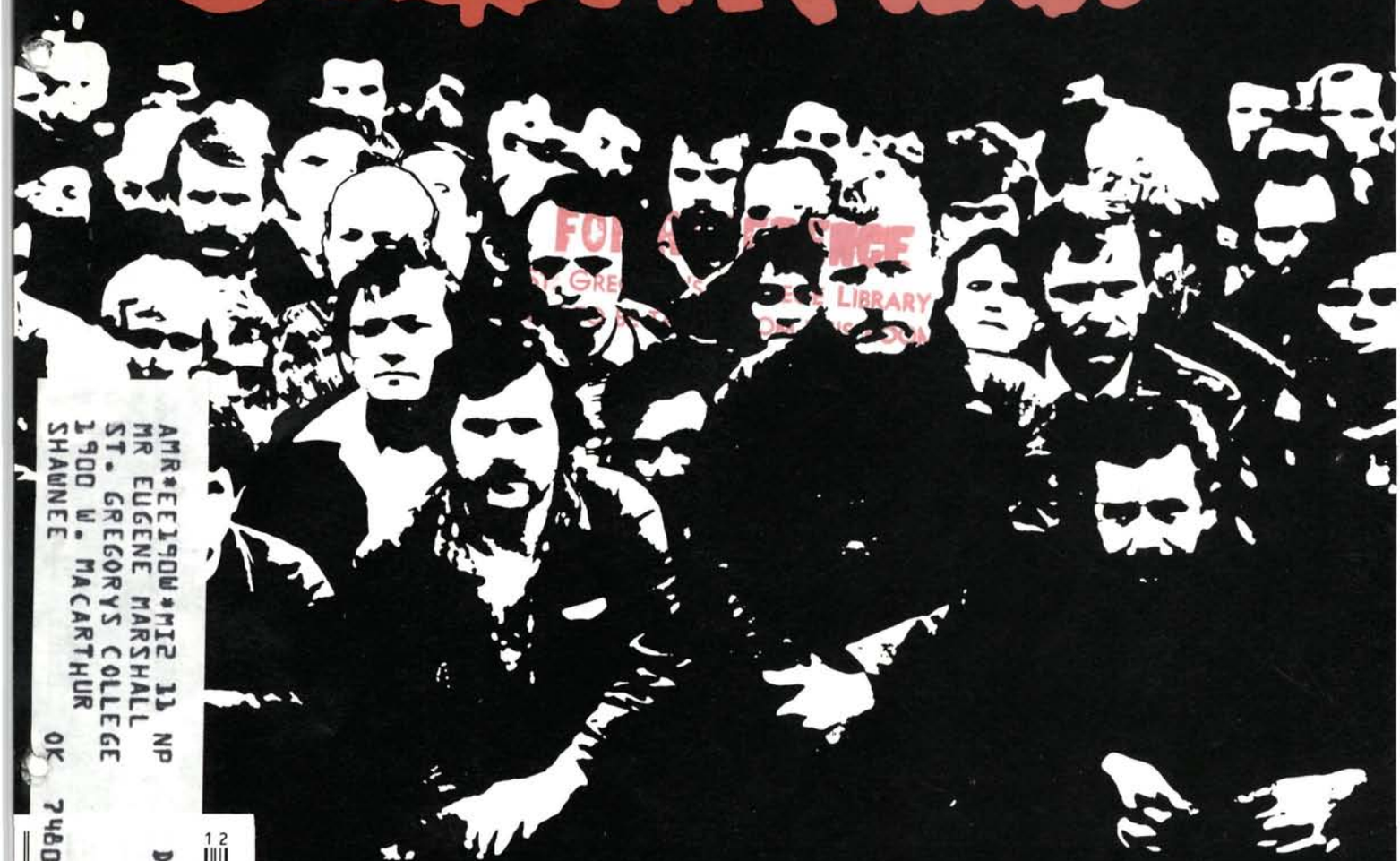

Abraham Brumberg on the Polish Revolt

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TRB

from Washington
March 21, 1981

Prestidigitation

The time has come to make the first tentative appraisal of President Reagan. He's given us a breathtaking three months. The word that keeps recurring is unreality. He inherited an economic crisis and, for better or worse, has faced up to it. To the Russians he's done just what the Republican platform at Detroit promised to do: he's set out to outscowl them and out-build them, ignoring their preliminary proposals to talk it over. He's also searched around and found a small but headline-catching test case to show how macho he is, in El Salvador. He has filled his administration with businessmen and conservatives to run things (with a four-star general to run the State Department) and has filled up a lot of the regulatory agencies with people who don't believe in regulation. Through all this he has remained relaxed and appealing, and right from the start has used his Hollywood training to communicate with the public over the heads of Congress.

One must be dull, I think, not to sense that we have something extraordinary here: this is not another Eisenhower who merely tried to slow down the clock of change. This goes back to Harding, perhaps, who, after Wilson, tried to set the clock back. This is a nice man, with a very conservative viewpoint, put at the head of a nuclear superpower at a critical juncture. His incumbency, by chance, coincides with the beginning of a new world economic era, the era of scarcity. Global supplies are running out, global population continues to explode. In the United States there is the end of a chapter. The country has been living beyond its means for a generation and paying for it by the concealed tax of inflation. Anybody could see something had to give. Only about half the US voters voted last November, but those who did voted overwhelmingly for Reagan.

Two of the most respected liberal economists in the country praise Reagan for proposing to cut back federal expenditures at this time. This is not a liberal versus conservative issue. Otto Eckstein of Harvard, president of Data Resources, Inc., says this "really is time for the historic reversal of budget policies even though it will be uncomfortable for many in our society to lose their special privileges." He told the House Ways and Means Committee, "in general philosophy and in its overall goals, President Reagan's program for economic recovery is the right one. . . . A new approach really is necessary for our economic future."

Walter Heller, of the University of Minnesota, who was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors and chief adviser to Kennedy and Johnson on economics, also wants expenditures cut and reasonable tax cuts. His testimony and Eckstein's are almost alike. They may not agree with the social welfare programs Reagan wants to drop out of the budget, but they strongly support reining in federal expenditures at this time.

But wait a minute. Yes, they want expenditures cut. And Reagan has given them cuts. Last week he sent a message to Congress calling for a grand total reduction of $55.9 billion for a year with hundreds of individual cuts, an extraordinary program to be assembled in such a short time. But what these moderate liberal economists object to is the alleged overweighing of the expenditure cuts with disproportionate tax cuts, accompanied by enormous increases in defense expenditures. The idea behind the whole program is sound, they say; it is the details of the program that are scary. The president is using the most rosy economic assumptions possible, asserts Eckstein. He's kidding himself, says Heller. Heller adds, "I favor tax cuts, both for individuals and for business, and they will help stimulate the economy, help recovery, and we need that. But his [Reagan's] forecasts are much too optimistic. He's projecting a four percent rate of real growth for the next three years. He's just not going to achieve that increase. They are hooked on the supply-side fairy tale."

When the president appeals, as he did on March 10, over the heads of Congress to the public (you and me) to support his economic recovery program, an appropriate answer might be: which program? There are actually three: 1) The program to cut individual segments of the budget. There will be screams on these items, whichever are touched. 2)The program to cut overall expenditures. This is overwhelmingly endorsed by almost anybody who dislikes inflation. 3) The program to cut taxes. This is tricky. Certainly it's wise to cut taxes where it will genuinely promote production, but even then it shouldn't be done if it cancels out the benefits of expenditure cuts.

My impression is that the president's momentum is weaker than he thinks, that Congress will find its voice before long, and that the White House will be lucky to get two-thirds of what it asks, perhaps only a half. The president has several problems. One is that El Salvador takes the spotlight off the budget. Time after time presidents have overcrowded Congress with crusades and concerns and found their influence diluted.

A bigger problem is that the president seems to have accepted the Kemp-Roth theory that inflation can be licked by psychology: cut taxes and recovery automatically occurs. An originator of the theory, California economist Arthur B. Laffer, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* on March 10, argued that this kind of recovery was exactly what occurred after the 1964 Kennedy-Johnson tax cut (engineered, incidentally, by Walter Heller.) "Reagan, it would seem, understands the true message of John F. Kennedy!" concluded Laffer triumphantly. This seems to be one of Laffer's curves. Surely he knows the crucial difference between 1981 and 1964. As Heller himself curtly said on television, "We've got 12 percent inflation today, not 1.2 percent inflation as in 1964." He added, "The new supply-side economics is laetrile for the cancer of inflation. It is a nostrum, not a cure."

Let the economists fight it out. Reagan, I suspect, has another problem: his credibility. Does he really think about where he's going when he plunges into these things? In a cozy farewell interview with Walter Cronkite the other day he made the astonishing proposal that the Mexican border be thrown open to immigrants, thus solving the problem of illegals and of Mexican population pressure at the same time. "I'm very intrigued with it," he said, "a proposal that we and the Mexican government get together and legalize this —and grant visas, because it is to our interest also that the safety valve be not shut off. . . . They would be able to go legally back across the border if they wanted to, and come back across."

Was he serious? In his casual manner it was hard to know. But this kind of doubt dogs the president.

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Correspondence

Questionable logic

To the editors:

I am baffled by Minister André Baeyens's letter responding to my "La Bombe" article (Correspondence, *TNR*, February 14). Stating that "Since 1974, France has conducted *all* its nuclear testing underground, on the atoll of Mururoa, east of Tahiti," Baeyens wonders, with questionable logic, "why would France choose as a site for atmospheric testing the islands of Kerguelen, which in fact lie closer to Australia than does Mururoa?" (The concern for Australia here has to do with possible radioactive fallout from atmospheric nuclear testing.) My article directly addresses this question, and answers it as follows:

If France wanted to realistically test a neutron bomb, this would require an atmospheric test. Such a test hardly could be conducted at Mururoa, where its verification and perpetrator would be certain. So France would go elsewhere, where verification would be very difficult and identifying the perpetrator almost impossible: like, shall we say, Kerguelen. Were indeed this to have been the French plan, all that can be said is that it succeeded brilliantly.

Regarding Baeyens's questioning the selection of Kerguelen as the test site, because of its closer proximity to Australia, the White House Ad Hoc Panel Report (whose findings he seems to respect) noted that no radioactive debris was detected—anywhere. Since neutron bombs are designed to minimize the production of radioactivity, in selecting Kerguelen, this expected negative result would have been a major planning factor. In fact, the Panel Report suggested that the dispersion of radioactivity in the southern hemisphere might have been further reduced by testing under rainy conditions, which may well have been the case in the suspected area. The logic behind Baeyens's questioning is questionable.

My article was entitled by *TNR*: "A Nuclear Detective Story." The thesis was purely conjectural; I had no "smoking gun" to present as evidence. There certainly was no intent to embarrass France; *au contraire*, the article pointed out that such a test was not "anything that could be labeled wrong, or not in the interests of mankind." Were it actually made, a French decision to conduct such a test would be, in my opinion, as admirable as the US decision to conduct U-2 flights a quarter-century ago. Nations should be obliged to do everything possible to enhance their survival, even if it means being a little sneaky now and them. If this is accomplished without getting caught, well: *Voilà*!

S. T. Cohen
Los Angeles, California

At the trough

To the editors:

Your March 7 editorial ("Whose Supply Side Is Reagan On?") brings to mind a new form of government subsidy that should be called to Mr. Stockman's attention. Recently taxpayers co-signed an additional $400,000,000 loan to Chrysler and the auto maker immediately sold that amount of 15.3 percent bonds.

President Reagan advises that his proposed tax cut is required to put more money in the hands of the investment community, but the Chrysler transaction flushed out $400,000,000 of investment capital in one day. This strongly indicates that there's plenty of money around; what we lack is *risk* capital.

The Chrysler bond investors will collect their interest without fear of loss because all risk is assumed by the government. Thus, in a very real sense, they are at the public trough as surely as are milk producers, tobacco farmers, and welfare recipients. These sure-thing investors should feel Mr. Stockman's axe too. Fair's fair.

James Grambart
Linwood, New Jersey

To the editors:

Your editorial "Whose Supply Side is Reagan On?" calls the Reagan administration's proposed changes in corporate depreciation schedules "a scandal." The term may be a bit harsh, but I essentially agree with your argument that "10-5-3" may be great for big business, but won't have beneficial effects on the US economy. The changes subsidize physical capital, not human capital, "dead things" such as real estate, buildings, machinery, not "live things" such as human creativity, inventiveness, craftsmanship, skill.

The editorial, though, incorrectly identifies the proposal as a "supply-side" idea when it is in fact only conservative, commercial Keynesianism on the "demand side." It flows from the idea that rank-and-file consumer demand is inflationary, because it bids up the price of consumer goods such as beer and bread. But business demand is good because it goes into investment goods, which produce other goods. The flaw in the argument is that goods don't produce goods any more than companies do. Only people produce. The supply-side prescription is Kemp-Roth, which cuts marginal tax rates on *people*. Insofar as Kemp-Roth has been diluted in the Reagan White House, it has been to accommodate the revenue costs of 10-5-3, supported actively by big business and passively by big labor.

Jude Wanniski, President
Polyconomics
Morristown, New Jersey

Illegitimate son

To the editors:

In Paul L. Berman's fascinating article on the mysterious writer B. Traven ("Weimar in the Sierra Madre," *TNR*, February 28) he states that Kaiser Wilhelm seems not to have had any natural sons. It may be of interest that Count Kessler, whose diary was published in installments in *Encounter* some years ago, was generally accepted by European society as the illegitimate son of Wilhelm.

Elias M. Schwarzbart
New York, New York

Racist affair

To the editors:

The obscene anti-Semitism of Anne Bernays in her article "Cad and Mouse" (*TNR*, March 7) can be explained in two ways only: either an intense self-hate or a woman spurned. Tarnower was a "cad," Jean Harris, his submissive mistress. It is only in Bernays's imagination that Mrs. Harris becomes the "chief *shiksa*," the Gentile victim of vile "Jewish" lust. Tarnower was "like a gypsy prince or an Arabian sheik." He was one of those "handsome, ascetic-looking" Jews with "hollow cheeks," who had "more non-Jewish patients than the other kind"; he was the "handsome make-out king," who "manipulated his victims, made them squirm."

(continued on page 40)

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 184, No. 12, Issue 3454, March 21, 1981. Published weekly (except the issues of January 3, July 11, August 8, August 29) and distributed by The New Republic, Inc., 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 331-7494. Single copy, $1.25; yearly subscriptions, $28; foreign, $31; students, $17.

Copyright 1981 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Item g. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide and Media Review Digest. The New Republic is available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Send all remittances, inquiries about subscriptions and undelivered copies, and changes of address to Subscription Service Department, The New Republic, P.O. Box 955, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

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Cover: "Solidarity." Photo courtesy of Frontlash/Polish Workers Aid Fund, AFL-CIO. Article on page 16.

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The New Republic is phototypeset and produced by 19th Street Graphix, Washington, DC.
Production Supervisor—*Kathy Sullivan*
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

March 21, 1981

Salvaging El Salvador

The first thing that needs to be said about El Salvador is that it is not Vietnam. It needs to be said because from the op-ed pages to Capitol Hill the specter of Vietnam hovers over the El Salvador debate. El Salvador is not the first "new Vietnam" sighting. Since the fall of Saigon in 1974 there have been many. Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan were thought destined to be Soviet Vietnams. Cambodia was to turn into Vietnam's Vietnam. And now there is El Salvador.

In fact, there has been only one Vietnam, and El Salvador is different in three crucial respects. First, instead of a succession of swaggering tin-horn generals, we're backing a civilian Christian Democratic president, José Napoleon Duarte, who won the presidency nine years ago in the only fair election El Salvador has had in 50 years. (He subsequently was denied the office, tortured, and exiled by the military.) Second, instead of a popular enemy living in jungles and villages where "the people are like water and the army is like fish," the Salvadoran guerrillas last year called three general strikes which all failed. And this year, to quote former US ambassador to El Salvador Robert White, they gave a war and no one came. Third, instead of half a million US conscripts, we're sending 54 non-combatant advisers, volunteers from a volunteer army. Importing the memory of Vietnam into El Salvador is an exercise in emotion, not analysis.

The second thing that needs to be said is that El Salvador is not Poland. Ronald Steel put that proposition in these pages last week: "The question raised in El Salvador today is, in essence, not very different than that raised in Poland. Can a relatively weak country within the sphere of influence of a great power be allowed to go through its own social revolution?" The assumption here is that sincerity requires a single attitude toward all social revolutions. It is a false assumption. Sincerity—and wisdom—require that revolutions, like all political events, be judged according to the value of their means and ends. The Polish labor revolution is a non-violent movement seeking to create (again) socialism with a human face. In El Salvador, the armed opposition has shown little evidence of a human face. It is controlled by Leninists (Marxists is a term more aptly applied to bookish types) using terror to establish a radical, anti-Western communist regime. We have no moral qualms about supporting Poland's revolutionaries and opposing El Salvador's.

The Reagan administration has based US opposition to the guerrillas on the grounds that they are merely surrogates for the Soviet Union and Cuba. The State Department's European blitz to peddle copies of its "Communist Interference in El Salvador" has been justly ridiculed as a replay of a discredited Vietnam argument and as an exercise in hypocrisy, given American willingness to intervene on the other side. The left's arms do indeed come from the Soviet bloc and its leaders do indeed meet in Havana. But that is not sufficient motive for opposing them. The reason to oppose them is because of what they intend *to do*—which is to turn El Salvador into another Cuba. That is not in the interest of the United States. If we believe anything about democracy and pluralism, we must

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believe it is not in the interest of El Salvador. And given the miserable failure of the left to gain support for its strikes and its "final offensive," there is good evidence that the Salvadoran people don't believe it is in their interest either.

The real dilemma for Americans in El Salvador lies in facing the fact that the right is just as brutal and hostile to democratic values and human rights as the left. Our values, and our interests, demand support for the center. The problem is that the civil war has bisected the political spectrum and the line runs right through the center.

WHEN DUARTE won the presidency in 1972 his vice presidential running mate was a Social Democrat, Guillermo Ungo. Ungo joined the civilian-military junta that overthrew the right-wing dictatorship in October 1979. He subsequently quit and joined the guerrillas. He has been instrumental in getting support for the left from European Social Democrats and from Mexico. They see the tide of revolution in Central America as irresistible. Their strategy is to acquiesce to the inevitable and try to strengthen the moderating forces in the leftist coalition to keep the post-revolutionary government from becoming too radical. The flaw in this approach is that Ungo leads only a small splinter in the opposition coalition, is excluded from the central military directorate that controls it, and is allied with at least three well-armed guerrilla factions who believe strongly in the relation between power and guns. Ungo has no guns, only friends. If Ungo's side wins, it is doubtful that even Willy Brandt will be able to save him from his friends.

That leaves Duarte. Since the 1979 coup, American policy under Carter and Reagan has been to support the civilian-military junta as the best hope for the center. Operating under conditions of virtual civil war, it has achieved genuine change. Before the land reform about half of all agricultural land was owned by a tiny oligarchy. With two decrees in 1980 the government transferred more than half of that property to peasant cooperatives and individual sharecropper families. (Compare this achievement to the fact that in Chile all the land reform under presidents Frei and Allende redistributed approximately the same percentage of the land.) More than half the peasantry is newly enfranchised. And the junta has backed up land reform by nationalizing the banks and extending credit to the new owner-farmers.

The problem with Duarte is that he does not have full control over the forces nominally under his command. El Salvador has a system of semi-autonomous militias. The national guard, the treasury and customs police, and the national police all have decentralized commands and often act on behalf of powerful local landlords. The State Department estimates that about 20 percent of the regular security forces are sympathetic to the extreme right. There is no evidence that Duarte is. His problem is weakness vis-à-vis his allies. The only solution is to strengthen him. And the way to to do it is with aid.

The economic aid that the administration is sending is desperately needed, especially in the face of leftist attempts to destroy the harvest and rightist attempts to disrupt the newly formed cooperatives. In any case, any society undergoing such extensive land reform can expect declines in production (although surprisingly these have been mild thus far) as old agricultural patterns change and as some economies of scale are lost.

Military assistance is more problematic. The principal purpose is to counter the hundreds of tons of equipment that the left has recently received, to replenish the stores spent by the junta in stopping the January offensive, and to ensure that the left does not achieve a military victory. It is true that some arms may fall into the wrong hands and strengthen the extreme right. But it is also true that the US, by making it clear to the army that it can only acquire what it needs through Duarte, strengthens his hand vis-à-vis his military. As a civilian and Christian Democrat with few personal allegiances in the armed forces, Duarte needs this lever to extend some control over the military and to marshal support for his reform program.

The modest aid proposed by the administration seems reasonable. But it must be accompanied by clearly spelled out conditions. First, continuation of the land reform program, in particular speeding up the tedious task of assigning and distributing titles for the land already transferred. (According to the AFL-CIO, Duarte is proceeding in good faith to accomplish this task.) Second, early elections and an attempt to wean some of the left-of-center democratic elements into a centrist coalition. Third, as much pressure as Duarte and the regular military can exert to restrain the right-wing death squads. Fourth, and most important, a clear understanding by the military that a coup means they are on their own and no longer will receive American support.

Our quarrel with the current Reagan policy is not with its actions but with its talk, which makes that last condition—that we will not tolerate a right-wing coup—difficult to enforce. It is a mistake to declare that preventing a leftist victory in El Salvador is a test case of born-again American will and prestige. The current situation in El Salvador is too fluid, the actors too unpredictable for us now to make a solemn commitment to prevent a leftist victory. Our policy must be to do whatever we can to build and reunite the center. But it is possible that the center will collapse, leaving only a choice between the extreme right and the extreme left. As Duarte himself said this week, that would result in an inevitable leftist victory, unless the United States sent in ground troops in support of the right. In that case, the US would find itself in a land war not merely against a small guerrilla army, but against an aroused population. Now *that* would be

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another Vietnam. It would tear this country apart again and undo a decade of psychological rebuilding of our unity and national purpose. It would likely prove to be a military, and certainly a moral, disaster. If the center collapses we might have to withdraw our aid and hope that the Mexicans and Social Democrats have some luck in moderating the victorious left into something closer to a Nicaragua than a Cuba. The point is that we must retain the option of changing our policy down the road, if necessary, not only to avoid disaster, but to give us today some leverage with any rightists contemplating a coup.

Drawing lines in the sand is a high-stakes move meant for Soviet consumption. The balance of forces in El Salvador is too precarious for our policy there to be distorted by such gestures. El Salvador is very small and very complex. Any US policy there must be grounded in Salvadoran realities. We have little chance of succeeding in El Salvador if we try to shape its future with our eyes fixed on Moscow, on Warsaw, or on Vietnam.

On the Hill

The Right-to-Life Split

The anti-abortion movement has always been characterized by an exhilarating absence of doubt. One can only envy the self-assurance of J. C. Willke, president of the National Right to Life Committee, when he announces that his group simply wants to "restore legal personhood and return civil rights to an entire class of living Americans." While philosophers and scientists puzzle over the question of whether the fetus is a living human being, Willke gallops ahead with the good news that the fetus is an American. As Willke further explained to the *New York Times*, proponents of an anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution want to cease "discrimination . . . based on the place of residence: the womb. If a kid could move to a new location, his life would be protected." Life, citizenship, and squatters' rights are liberally bestowed upon the fertilized egg.

Because right-to-lifers have never seriously doubted the humanity of the unborn, they have never disagreed about the need to outlaw abortion. Now, however, with a number of bills before Congress that would do just that, the right-to-lifers are fretting and quarreling about which to choose. A joint resolution introduced by Senator Jake Garn of Utah and Representative James Oberstar of Minnesota proposes an anti-abortion amendment with an exception for cases in which the mother's life may be endangered. This leaves a loophole for pro-choice legislators and judges, who are likely to define life endangerment very broadly. A second constitutional amendment, introduced by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Representative Henry Hyde of Illinois, contains no exceptions. A third proposal, also introduced by Helms and Hyde, attempts to turn the constitutional question into a legislative one, by stating in a bill that "human life shall be deemed to exist from conception," and by permitting no federal court to hear abortion cases except the Supreme Court. Right-to-lifers disagree about the usefulness of this proposal. Most find it far less satisfactory than a constitutional guarantee, which would not be as vulnerable to legislative whim.

Between the two versions of the human life amendment, the Garn-Oberstar resolution (with the exception for life endangerment) enjoys wider congressional support than the Helms-Hyde resolution. The House version of Garn-Oberstar has 32 co-sponsors. The Senate version has 27, an eclectic group that includes Alfonse D'Amato of New York, Thomas Eagleton, Barry Goldwater, and William Proxmire. By contrast, Helms-Hyde has only three co-sponsors. And because legislators like to seem amenable to compromise, the more moderate human life amendment is likely to get more support on the floor of the House and Senate than the more extreme no-exception amendment.

But anti-abortion groups waffle on which version to support. The National Right to Life Committee, the largest group of all, has favored the life-endangerment exception in the past. Now it is reconsidering. After voting and discussion at national, state, and local levels, the group says it will decide by mid-April. Paul Brown, director of the Life Amendment Political Action Committee and director of legislative affairs for the American Life Lobby, favors the no-exception amendment. But de-emphasizing any possible rift in the movement, he adds, "I believe that the people who support the other bill are saying basically the same thing." It's just a question, Brown says, of how much you want to trust the courts. Doug Badger, legislative director of the Christian Action Council, says his group will support whatever version of the amendment Congress chooses.

More perplexing for right-to-lifers is the question of whether to support the legislative alternative, the much-publicized human life bill. The Helms-Hyde bill is "a back-door attempt to amend the Constitution," according to Suellen Lowry, a lobbyist for the pro-choice National Abortion Rights Action League. Paul Brown dislikes it for a different reason: "It offers our opponents the chance to get off the hook." Passage might well decrease momentum to pass a constitutional amendment and allow pro-choice activists to switch from the hard task of blocking ratification of the amendment to the easier job of repealing the legislation. But Mary Jane Tobin, who heads New York's powerful Right to Life party, favors the bill as a stopgap. "It isn't a substitute for the human life amendment," she says, but "we wouldn't oppose any right-to-

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life legislation." Willke says his group won't support the bill "as introduced," but is vague on what alterations might win approval. The Christian Action Council supports the Helms bill, but with few illusions: "A piece of legislation doesn't cover everything an amendment does. It can be repealed as easily as passed. So we don't see the bill as a substitute for the human life amendment."

Probably none of these people were pleased when Ronald Reagan said at a March 6 press conference that once the unborn fetus is defined as living, "there really isn't any need for an amendment, because once you have determined this, the Constitution already protects human life." But Reagan's wording was so unclear that there's some confusion as to whether he was talking about Helms-Hyde. The question actually was about a human life *amendment*, and Reagan answered with vague talk about deciding whether the fetus is alive. He did not specify whether that decision would come from the courts or the legislature. The White House press office and the Department of Health and Human Services say they can't clarify whether Reagan has endorsed Helms-Hyde. Even Henry Hyde says, "I honestly don't know." If Reagan endorsed Helms-Hyde as a substitution for a constitutional amendment rather than a stopgap, even Hyde says, "I think he's mistaken. Given the opportunity, I would acquaint him with the fact that the amendment is still our ultimate goal."

ANOTHER problem is the bill's vulnerability to court challenge on constitutional grounds. The measure interprets the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee that states shall not deprive persons of life without due process of law this way: "human life shall be deemed to exist from conception, without regard to race, sex, age, health, defect, or condition of dependency; and for this purpose 'person' shall include all human life."

This interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment conflicts with that of the Supreme Court as expressed in *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 case which upheld the rights of a mother over those of a first-trimester fetus. The Court found no precedent for recognizing pre-natal rights in the Constitution, and noted that life was defined to begin at birth even by the Catholic church before the 19th century. A second constitutional objection that can be raised against the bill is its restriction of jurisdiction to the Supreme Court. This probably violates guarantees of due process and equal protection under the law because the Supreme Court could hear only a tiny fraction of the abortion cases that petitioners might wish to bring before the federal courts. (Bills introduced by representatives John Ashbrook of Ohio and Philip Crane of Illinois go even further, prohibiting Supreme Court jurisdiction on abortion.) Legislators, one hopes, will be scared off by these constitutional difficulties. Would the Supreme Court accept the transfer of constitutional rights from mother to fetus and abdicate the authority of the federal judiciary? Possibly after the arrival of one or more Reagan appointees, but probably not before.

Despite much publicity, neither of the two versions of the human life amendment nor the human rights bill seems likely to pass in the current Congress. True, many of the Senate proposals will get a sympathetic hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee subcommittee chaired by Orrin Hatch of Utah, a right-to-lifer. But even so, Willke of the National Right to Life Committee figures a human life amendment is still nearly 20 votes short of Senate passage. And the measure's prospects, fortunately, are worse in the House. The chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Peter Rodino, "does not vote pro-choice on funding issues but . . . has never indicated support for an anti-abortion constitutional amendment," according to the National Abortion Rights Action League newsletter. Rodino has assigned all the House proposals on abortion to the constitutional rights subcommittee, chaired by the adamantly pro-choice Don Edwards of California. Edwards is confident that the pro-life measures will go no further. "The majority of this subcommittee has not been interested in constitutional amendments on abortion," Edwards says. An attempt to bring an amendment out of committee and onto the floor by discharge petition would require an arduous process which includes collecting 218 signatures, holding a long floor debate, and winning a majority vote of the House. It's unlikely that representatives will put themselves through all this to hasten a vote on an issue most of them have spent many years avoiding. Edwards says a discharge petition would be "defeated handily." Even if it weren't, Willke admits that his side is more than 40 votes short of the necessary two-thirds House majority to carry the amendment. The more controversial human rights bill probably would fare worse.

Alas, the long-term prospects for these proposals are better. Election to the House of just a few more pro-life activists in 1982 might tip the balance. And a new pro-life caucus has been formed in Congress to sift through conflicting anti-abortion measures and impose some unity on future legislative efforts. "We can't have the luxury of bringing up amendments with no prior briefing or discussion," says Republican representative Charles Dougherty of Pennsylvania, a co-chairman of the group. Drawing the divided pro-life groups together in support of bills it favors is bound to be another important, if unspoken, goal for the caucus.

Once the right-to-life movement gets solidly behind a single measure, it will command an impressive grass-roots following. The National Right to Life Committee alone claims upward of 10 million members. Its pro-choice counterpart, the National Abortion Rights Action League, has only 100,000. Financially, "we're just a spit in the ocean compared to Planned Parenthood," Willke says modestly. But he won't say how

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much his local, state, and national budgets add up to. "Somewhere in the millions," is all he will say. The National Abortion Rights Action League has a budget of $1.5 million.

Now pro-life groups, too, are seeking to build grassroots support. "We're putting less emphasis on what is happening nationally," NARAL spokeswoman Janet Beal says. "We really see the battle in the states." Expectation that Congress may pass a human life amendment and submit it for ratification to state legislatures is only one reason for the shift. NARAL is also fighting a state-by-state call for a constitutional convention. In order to circumvent Congress in this fashion, 34 states are required to petition; 30 already have. Ironically, while grassroots support for the pro-life movement grows, most Harris and *New York Times*/CBS polls continue to show that a slim majority of Americans oppose making abortions illegal.

One further advantage for the pro-life movement is the urge in Congress to cut waste from the federal budget. Since 1976, when Hyde first introduced his amendment to cut off Medicaid funding for abortions, support for similar measures has been growing. Now the American Life Lobby has compiled a hit list of federal programs that indirectly fund the promotion or performing of abortions through private groups such as Planned Parenthood, through departments of the federal government, and through allocations to the District of Columbia. If the anti-abortionists can't pass their constitutional amendment yet, they still can achieve some successes this year, and the danger is that there will be more to come.

Timothy Noah

A Fool and His Money

Bible Boom

A money-making investor must be an optimistic person, not about the world, but about himself. He must see the possibility of profit in the bleakest, the most worrisome, or the most distasteful of situations.

For example, the investing liberal shouldn't confine himself to disapproving of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. He should be busy figuring out how he can make a few bucks off these born-again screwballs. Why let Oral Roberts get to keep all the collection money? Isn't it enough he wants to end bundling and spoil all the fun?

With that in mind, your Fool recommends Thomas Nelson Publishers, the Nashville-based house which prints and sells more Bibles than any other company in America. Of the eight major English translations of the Bible, this company publishes six. Moreover, Nelson publishes 500 different editions that retail from two bucks to $100. These folks are the General Motors of biblitude. They sell to Sears, to K-Mart, to J.C. Penny; they sell in bulk to the Methodists, to Billy Graham and, yuch! "PTL" (Praise the Lord), that TV program featuring the most complacent, evangelistic bluenoses on the airwaves; but the pink flamingo crowd loves 'em. Think how your liberal irritation would be assuaged of a Sunday morning when, by accident, your dial stuck on one of those electronic Christers, and then you realized as he was making his big pitch, the guy was selling *your* product, that he was pushing up your capital gains every time he brought another baa-baa to the altar for fleecing.

Nelson has just finished completing all the developmental work on a "new" King James Bible, one with all the good old-time religion flavor that the most shamelessly retrograde broadcast preacher demands, but with enough updated vocabulary to make it intelligible even to intellects like those of Donnie and Marie Osmond. Market-testing results have been very favorable, according to the Fool's commercial spy network. What's more, the three million dollars it cost to bring this book to market have already been raised, so all that remains now is to sell the bejesus out of the sucker, which Nelson will certainly do. This is a firm that doesn't miss a trick when it comes to pushing Bibles. In addition to filling bulk orders for the Seventh Day Adventists and the chain stores, Nelson also has a door-to-door sales campaign using college students. That's a cash only, *tochis* on *tisch* deal.

This is not a stock to be bought for dividends, which are nonexistent, but for appreciation. It's been climbing in value lately, so be careful not to buy it for more than $20 a share, max. You'd do best to watch it, and grab it if you see it around $17. When it hits $30, get rid of it. Remember Our Lord's injunction to the stockjobbers, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, pigs make money but hogs don't."

Two other words of caution. This is a speculative stock, not to be bought with money you need or in place of an annuity. This latest religious revival could fade and the Bible business could slump. Another warning. There are not a lot of shares of this stock around. Nelson is not like AT&T, a stock you can buy and sell immediately just by picking up the phone and calling your broker. Some days there may be no Nelson stock bought or sold, so if you want a stock that is immediately transferable back into cash, this is not for you.

Bibles should be relatively recession-proof. When times are tough, many a person can think of nothing

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else to do but demonstrate against abortion and pray. However, the Fool isn't predicting a recession; what we're experiencing isn't a crash or a sudden drop and no really bad one should be anticipated. Rather this is like a California canyon after a spring freshet, an oozing downward. Employment should remain about where it is, with most people who want work getting it, but the hours will be longer and the disposable income will be lower.

The Reagan administration is following the path the Carter administration began in choosing to favor capital investment over consumer consumption. Under Carter we had the Steiger Amendment cutting the capital gains tax, and under Reagan we have a tax cut that won't stimulate consumer expenditures but is supposed to put more money in the hands of the well-to-do who, it is presumed, will put it out to hire to buy new plant and equipment.

This aspect of supply-side economics isn't new, although other aspects, such as deregulation, are. Stalin pursued the same policies, as did Mao, with what effect we will let others judge. The difference is that the kulaks and coolies were not asked to take a cut in their standard of living in order to build up the basic, capital-goods industries like steel and machine tools. They were told they would have to postpone a rise in their standards. American workers, however, have been taking cuts, first through inflation and now increasingly by being forced to accept downward revisions in their employment contracts.

Pay cuts at Chrysler have gotten a lot of publicity. These are now being followed by demands from General Motors and Ford to auto workers' unions that their workers also be cut back. The logic is that a two-tiered wage system in the industry means that the Big Two can't make it either if their labor costs are to be several hundred dollars a machine higher than the competition.

UNTIL A FEW years ago, it was axiomatic that the price of labor in basic, highly unionized industries went in only one direction—up. This is no longer the case. Now workers in a number of companies in auto, steel, rubber, and coal are getting less in the form of deferred wage raises, fewer fringe benefits, or outright cuts. The nearly complete disappearance of union labor in many segments of the construction industry has had the same effects. Although these comparisons are difficult to make, it appears that in important industry groups, our workers now make less than their counterparts in Japan and Germany.

We no longer hear what was once the politicians' loudest and proudest July 4 boast that, "The American worker is the highest-paid worker in the world." Once upon a time, it was the peons in places where they ate garlic and raw fish-eyes who broke their fannies for a few pfennigs, not your free and fortunate American worker. Ah, for 1916 when Henry Ford astounded the world by offering the five-dollar-a-day wage. They said he was crazy, that he'd go broke, that he'd spoil 'em and make 'em lazy, but he said the American worker deserved it, that when you pay a man good wages, he'll have the money to buy what you make.

In those days of American optimism it never occurred to anyone to try and have the government channel investment by deliberately following a policy of income-shrinking for certain statistical classes of citizens. In that era, they didn't tell Henry Ford to hold up on mass producing the Model T, the famous Tin Lizzie, while somebody else built the steel plants for the material that went into them. Quite the reverse. Demand for the Tin Lizzie stimulated demand for greater steel production.

ALL OF THIS induces the Fool to recommend Cooper Tire & Rubber, if it can be got in the middle 30s per share. It has been selling way above past prices, but in the mud-oozing economy it has much to recommend it. It is the beneficiary of one of those new, lower-cost labor contracts with the United Rubber Workers that includes something unheard of 10 years ago, a switch from hourly wages to piecework. Cooper also has been admirably aggressive in capturing a lot of replacement tire business, which should stay healthy as people sicken over new car prices, even with rebates, and come to realize that, regardless of what the price of gas may be, the cheapest car on the road is the one fully paid for.

At length even the Tin Lizzies rusted out, and there's nothing for it but a new car. Even in a bad year millions of new cars are sold and the perspicacious investor should be able to get a few drachmae of profit from this once gold-plated business. With that in mind your Fool suggests you look into Honda stock. I don't have to tout its product, one that certainly appeals to tight budgets and ghastly gasoline prices.

Recently Honda has been selling in the mid-20s. This is too high for what the Fool has in mind. Track this stock and wait until it drops, when the Reagan people capitulate to their big-business buddies and make a move toward limiting Japanese imports. Honda should dive, maybe as much as five or six dollars a share. Then buy it. The company is opening up an American assembly plant that will be immune to import restrictions, which still won't save the stock from a temporary downflip when the market gets scared of all things Japanese.

In poor times you can make money by selling high-quality, top-ticket items too. There'll still be enough rich and comfortable people around to buy Maytag washing machines, which, industry analysts say, are actually as good and trouble-free as Maytag boasts in its ads. This is a top-of-the-line product, more expensive but so reliable and good at its job that it keeps selling through stormy weather and fair. You should get a nine or 10 percent dividend on your stock. This is not a stock whose price bounces around much, so don't count on fast appreciation. But one of these days Wall

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Nick's Picks . . . Bart's Charts

One month we're making a killing in commodities futures, the next month we're getting killed. I'm sorry to say that this month it's the latter. We bought fresh broiler contracts worth over $15,000 each for only $1,000 each, with our mythical broker holding the contract as collateral. If our 30,000-pound contracts decline 2.5 cents a pound (75 percent of our equity), the broker will sell the contracts to recover his own investment. But while we still are the proud owners of contracts promising delivery of a total of 1,425 tons of chickens in December, their decline of 1.25 cents a pound has set us back over $35,000. Even worse, a similar decline in the coming month will wipe out our investment. This poultry plunge has resulted in the Fool fund showing a loss for the first time. While we're on the subject, if we had decided to hold on to our March pork bellies contracts until the very end, we would have lost our investment (instead of the $115,000 profit we earned by selling in January), as belly prices have plummeted.

The rest of our portfolio has remained quiet. Yes, our Chrysler bonds are up for the second consecutive month, but unfortunately this accomplishment is about as significant as Chrysler's assertion in its latest commercials that it's the only American auto maker to post a gain in car sales in recent weeks. Chrysler appears to be gaining only when you compare its current performance to its appalling prior record. Still, we did receive a check for $7,313 in semi-annual interest from these bonds this month, a yield of almost 15 percent. Not bad, as long as the whole thing doesn't collapse.

Why have the stock and bond markets been so sluggish this year? There are numerous factors, but one that is being widely discussed now is the rapid growth of money market funds, which are diverting money from other investment vehicles. When we began this exercise last June, there was about $70 billion in money funds. By January 1, 1981, this had grown modestly to $75 billion. But since then the flow has accelerated tremendously, averaging an increase of two billion dollars a week. This week the funds should exceed the $100-billion mark, and experts believe that by the end of the year they will be around $150 billion. Certainly a major factor has been the availability of high interest rates. Our money in Dreyfus Liquid Assets, which was earning eight percent last summer, peaked at 16.9 percent last month. Other reasons for the growing popularity of money market funds are that they have check-writing privileges and no penalty for withdrawals.

There are now several legislative attempts under way to set up restrictions on these funds to make other investments more competitive; much of the pressure is coming from badly suffering savings and loan associations. So far these efforts have resulted primarily in wider exposure of the advantages of money funds. A steep decline in interest rates would have the largest impact on slowing down their growth. This month Dreyfus's yield did begin to fall—to an average 16.3 percent for the month, and an even lower 15.8 percent for the last week—but it would have to show a more dramatic decline before we would want to put our money elsewhere.

But we will still make our required investment for the month. With the interest we collected from Dreyfus and Chrysler we now have $205,379. After considerable searching we have been able to come up with 5,300 shares of Thomas Nelson, which at $18¾ a share is worth $99,375, with $994 (one percent) going as commission to our non-discount broker, who still gives us a good deal since we're such a big customer.

After 38 weeks our portfolio looks like this:

	February 10	March 9
93 Beatrice Foods bonds	$ 75,795	$ 79,050
156 Chrysler Financial Corp. bonds	82,680	85,605
140 Resorts International bonds	86,800	89,950
11,250 shares MONY Mortgage	84,375	82,969
1,640 shares Nucor	111,930	107,010
11,778 shares Templeton Growth Fund	87,628	88,099
2,250 shares Gulf Oil	87,188	82,125
95 fresh broiler futures on margin	92,150	56,525
4,500 shares Citicorp	99,563	101,813
5,300 shares Thomas Nelson		99,375
Dreyfus Liquid Assets	195,613	105,010
TOTAL	$1,003,722	$ 977,531

The score so far (since June 20, 1980):

Consumer Price Index (estimated)	+ 6.8 percent
Dow Jones Industrial Average	+11.7 percent
TNR's Fool Fund	- 2.2 percent

Bart Rubenstein

Bart Rubenstein is general manager of *Channels* magazine, which will begin publication in April.

Street may decide solid, safe, and reliable is in and then your Maytag may do more than clean your socks for you.

Another stock that should be impervious to bad news for the little people is Team, Inc., of Houston, Texas. Every year this hustling little company makes more money, and no wonder. Its specialty is repairing broken pipes in oil refineries, which it accomplishes without having to interrupt production. Team also reconditions, as they say in the oil industry, drilling mud, an indispensable substance in putting down a well. Altogether a nice business cashing in on the high price of energy and our oil exploration fever without having to gamble on someone hitting a gusher.

Finally, the Fool is in receipt of a letter from George Brown of Brown & Company, securities corporation of Boston. Mr. Brown correctly points out that an investor can save a lot of change by purchasing stocks through a discount house. Essentially a discount house on Wall Street is just what it is in the TV and stereo business, a place that sells without frills to customers who walk in the door knowing what they want and don't need advice. If you want a stockbroker to hold your hand, give you tips, and yuk you up, then you want to go to someplace like Paine Webber which will charge you more. If you do it on your own and make

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your buy and sell decisions from market letters, tips from your lawyer or your barber, then you can go the discount route. Whatever you do, do not rely on the Fool. We've been getting letters from people who say they do. It makes as much sense to get your investment advice from a magazine column as it does to get your medical advice from the medical column in your newspaper. "Nick's Picks . . . Bart's Charts" is to keep you appraised of business and economics in a fun way. For reliable investment advice, see an astologer.

Nicholas von Hoffman

Nicholas von Hoffman is a syndicated columnist.

What's a Social Democrat?

Labour's Loss

The resignation of 12 members of Parliament from the Labour party in Britain, in order to form a new party to be known as the Social Democrats, could be an event of great importance. The latest public opinion polls there show that in an election now the Social Democrats would take more votes from the Conservatives than from Labour. That is what one would expect at the moment. Labour has steadily ceded ground in the center to the Conservatives, and that is the ground one would expect a moderate left-wing party to reoccupy first. But that only forces to the front one of the main questions about the Social Democrats that must be answered as one considers their prospects. Class is at the roots of politics in Britain. How much will the Social Democrats reach beyond the middle class to appeal to the working class?

The degree to which the Social Democrats take socialist positions is another question. It cannot be the first. That must be where they expect to find consistent class support, as Labour always has done in the working class and the Conservatives in the middle and upper classes. If the Social Democrats hope only or primarily to be a middle-class party, then they are likely to make little more progress than the Liberals in recent years. They must have strong support in the working class.

A couple of years ago an intensive survey, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*, was conducted by a team at Oxford University. The team was led by John Goldthorpe, a respected British sociologist. One reviewer said that the book's observations and predictions "are as disturbing about the future as they are depressing about the past." The book showed not only that there had been little increase in equality of chances for the working class, but that there was precious little chance of any improvement if present attitudes and policies were not changed radically.

This immobility is the cause of working-class sullenness, of union militancy, and of the factiousness of the Labour party. Along with lackadaisical management and out-of-date industrial practices, it is responsible for Britain's economic difficulties and national purposelessness. Only two areas of British society work nowadays: the monarchy and the still magnificently trained and disciplined armed forces. For all its virtues, the monarchy does not produce much, or claim to do so. It is also difficult to inspire a whole nation as if it were an army. The long and short of it is that Britain is still as Disraeli described it, the "two nations" of his famous novel. It is the basic fact of British politics.

The challenge to the Social Democrats lies in the Oxford survey. It shows that over the past few decades social changes have, "if anything, tended in certain respects to generate still greater inequalities of class chances." It noted the rise of a "service class" of people in secure, well-paid jobs, with defined career prospects —mainly in the professions, in local and national government, in higher technical jobs, and in middle to senior management. Some of the recruits to this new class are indeed drawn from the manual working class, the study reported. But then, the failure: "An enormous discrepancy emerges if one compares the chances of sons of men" in the service class "with the same relative chances of men of working-class origin." And what's more: "The inequalities that prevail are often of a quite gross kind, at least between the higher division of the service class and the working class." Changing these patterns is the task the Social Democrats should take up if they are serious. It is the only way they can reach for mass support.

It takes more than a hurricane to fell a deep-rooted tree, though. The roots of the Labour party in the working class are deep. The party has moved so irresponsibly to the left in recent years that it is now out of touch even with the aspirations of its followers. But that does not mean that its followers will not continue to follow. If lives are as wretchedly confined as those of the working class in Britain, the working class will stay with its traditional protectors rather than risk an alternative. Goldthorpe showed in an earlier survey that the lives of even the affluent workers in Britain are still confined within the radius of a 10-minute walk. The image could not be more expressive: the home, the workplace, the pub, the corner store, the relatives, the local soccer ground—and that is really all, except, for some, the chapel. Thrust and kept in one place, the workers will stay with the familiar: with union men, even if the unions now mistake their real needs, and with the Labour party, even if it commits itself to policies that will not help them.

The Social Democrats are right in leaving the Labour party. They really had no alternative but to resign, given Labour's policies—its wish to withdraw,

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in effect, from the Western alliance; its repudiation of the mixed economy in Britain, which has been as much the creation of Labour as of the Conservatives; its pursuit of an absurd program of nationalization; and finally its abandonment, within its own organization, of the traditions of parliamentary rule. Forming a new party was necessary, timely, and courageous. But what the Social Democrats have rejected is now less important to their future than what they propose. A great deal is going to depend on their first manifesto. We will know from it whether they will remain only marginal, or intend to try to become a mass party.

The prescription was given to them by one of their earlier colleagues, Anthony Crosland, a social democrat like them and also a disciple of Hugh Gaitskell. In a famous statement, attempting to rid the Labour party of its obsession with nationalization, he said in his most solid work: "Socialism is about equality." It really has been the binding conviction of the Labour party from the beginning, and it is the only conviction that can meet the allurement of an inflexible state-managed economy.

One hears much of the rule of militancy in the Labour party at present, but that militancy has one source that is often overlooked. Its militancy is drawn from a gerontocracy. The party workers on whom the Labour party depends remind one of a number of old politburos. They are no more interested in or capable of loosening the economy or the society than their counterparts in Russia. They are also no more genuinely interested in the spreading of equality.

Inequality ravages the lives of the working class in Britain. It is appalling that the sixth edition of *Social Trends*, a government summary of social statistics, should have reported not long ago: "Variations in the standardized mortality ratio by social class are as high in recent years as they were fifty years ago." The current program of the Labour party will do nothing to alter this situation. But no one knows how the Social Democrats hope to alter it. They must begin by establishing first principles. The first principle of social democracy always has been that equality and mobility are inseparable, that opportunities of mobility without genuinely equal chances are a fraud on the majority. The Social Democrats can have no lesser or even any other inspiration; they can intend no lesser or other inspiration to social democrats anywhere.

R. H. Tawney once told of how intelligent tadpoles look at their social environment. They accept the fact that most tadpoles will never be more than tadpoles. But the intelligent tadpoles will survive. They will survive to "shed their tails, distend their mouths and stomachs, hop nimbly onto dry land, and croak addresses to their former friends" on how tadpoles can rise by virtue of their own character, and especially their intelligence. The intelligent tadpoles become frogs. That is mobility when it is unaccompanied by equality, and the Social Democrats will not create a party by appealing to those—Goldthorpe's "service class"—who have become frogs.

It is probably necessary that the Social Democrats make a temporary alliance in the center with the Liberal party. They must establish a footing in some constituencies. But the alliance can be only an electoral one. It cannot be made on the basis of a joint program, but only for the purpose of temporary advantage. The Social Democrats must concentrate on more than maneuver, though. They must tell us their *raison d'être*. If they are prepared to abandon the socialism in the social democracy, to forget the bidding that socialism is about equality, then they will confound their own inspiration, courage, and opportunity. If they do so, they will leave the center to the Conservatives, and the working class to the Labour party, with no alternatives. With no other alternatives, at least, than that which Goldthorpe foresees: deepened class conflict. In the failure to extend equality, he says, class conflict will be a necessity. That is the only measure by which the Social Democrats will be judged in the end. One waits to hear from them.

Henry Fairlie

Laetrile, alchemy, and Reaganomics.

Sleight of Mind

President Reagan appeals for congressional and popular support of his economic recovery program principally on the ground that this new beginning is the way, the only way, to cut inflation, put the unemployed to work, and speed up economic growth. Stagflation certainly is the debilitating economic disease of the 1970s and 1980s, and we desperately need a remedy. The president says the remedy entails cutbacks of special claims on the federal treasury, and the nation is ready to believe him and to make those sacrifices. Yet it's a mystery how one can get to the rosy fiscal and economic future he promises by pursuing his program. Even for its authors and proponents, this is a matter of faith. In reality, the program is largely irrelevant to stagflation and should be judged by the Congress and the people by its true objectives and predictable effects, which are quite different.

The program consists mainly of Stockman's hit list of budget cuts and of Kemp-Roth tax reductions. Business is to get fast depreciation write-offs, and the Federal Reserve is to keep tightening the monetary screws. The grand macroeconomic strategy is obscure, but the redirection of national priorities is clear enough. Resources are to be shifted from the public sector to private use, from civilian government to defense, from federal to state and local control. Wealth and power are to be redistributed to the wealthy and powerful.

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Over the last half-century, this country and all other democratic nations have developed a pragmatic mixture of private and public social and economic institutions. Imperfect as they are, these institutions have made capitalism a more equitable and viable system than it was in the preceding century. They have gained the support of a broad political consensus, excluding only extremes on the left and right. Those who value the tradition should defend it. President Reagan's hysterical exaggerations notwithstanding, no imminent economic disaster compels us to turn back the clock.

Evaluated on their merits, many of the proposed budget economies do meet the tests of efficiency and equity. Examples are dairy price supports, subsidized student loans, aid to "federally impacted" school districts, air and water user charges, trade adjustment assistance. There are more where these came from, and maybe they will be picked up in the next round (for example, other farm price supports and subsidies, maritime shipping and shipbuilding subsidies, veterans' medical care for non-service-connected disabilities). Even Social Security benefits, over-indexed and tax-free, deserve Mr. Stockman's scrutiny; most of them go to people well above "safety-net" levels. His attention is also invited to the host of other "tax expenditures," open-ended licenses to taxpayers to dispose of potential federal revenues (deductibility of mortgage interest, exclusion of state and local debt interest, charitable deductions, energy tax credits). And a president who bravely proclaims "The taxing power of the government . . . must not be used to regulate the economy or bring about social changes" surely will think twice before proposing tax credits for private school tuitions.

BUT THE CUTS in welfare, nutrition, and jobs programs, in combination with the highly regressive tax reductions, are mean-spirited. Marginal tax rates are to be lowered for the rich to provide incentives to work and invest. At the same time, the administration is increasing disincentives for the poor and working poor through needs tests for food stamps and other programs. Increased autonomy for the states in administration of welfare and Medicaid is a step backward. Regional differences in benefits, eligibility standards, and fairness of administration will become an even greater source of privation, inequity, and migration than they have been. Cuts in federal aid will create serious fiscal crises for state and local governments, which will have to raise taxes, issue more debt, and curtail services.

And some of the Reagan-Stockman budget cuts are narrow-minded and vindictive. A wealthy pluralistic nation can afford a few tax dollars for space exploration, for the arts and humanities, for noncommercial broadcasting, and, if I may say so, for basic social science research (targeted for a cut within the billion-dollar National Science Foundation from $40 million to $10 million).

Whatever their direct costs and benefits, these budget and tax proposals are not a cure for stagflation. There are two reasons why this is so. The first is that the tax and spending proposals for 1981 and 1982 virtually cancel each other out in net impact on demand for goods and services and for funds from capital markets. Congress may shift the balance one way or the other, of course. According to administration projections, tax cuts in subsequent years will make the budget expansionary. Whether they will be a welcome stimulus to economic recovery or an unwelcome source of higher prices and interest rates is uncertain today.

The second reason is much more important. It is the failure of the program to face squarely the stubborn wage and cost inflation in America today. Wage rates and other dollar incomes have been rising at 10 percent per year. Until this stubborn trend in production costs is broken, inflation will not subside permanently. This is hard arithmetic fact, as true in the through-the-looking-glass world of supply-side economics as in monetarist or Keynesian models.

Actual consumer price inflation, month to month and year to year, is more volatile than the underlying core of wage and cost inflation. It reflects world prices of oil and other commodities, US agricultural harvests and exports, mortgage interest rates, changes of Social Security and sales taxes, depreciation or appreciation of the dollar against other currencies, and a host of other events. Their effects on inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index occur irregularly and are often transient and reversible. Thus the index shows frighteningly high inflation rates during OPEC shocks and oil supply interruptions, but below average rates when oil markets are quiescent. The CPI spurts during credit crunches and food shortages, and slows down when they are relieved. At various times during the next four years—perhaps if he is lucky, in election years—President Reagan will have good news to report about inflation. But it will not be lasting good news unless wage and cost inflation subside significantly.

President Reagan's economic scenario takes nine points off consumer price inflation in five years. Even an optimist about productivity, food prices, and—despite decontrol and OPEC—energy prices cannot expect so much price disinflation unless at least five points are knocked off wage inflation. It will probably take more. How is the program for economic recovery supposed to make this happen?

Certainly not by the classical "cold turkey" cure, involving deep recession and high unemployment, prolonged until workers desperate to protect jobs and employers on the verge of bankruptcy cut wages and prices. The president wants and expects nothing of the kind. He promises 13 million new jobs and reduction of unemployment to six percent in 1985. Prime Minister Thatcher tells unruly citizens they will never enjoy prosperity again until they mend their inflationary

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ways, and she means it. Ronald Reagan is not Margaret Thatcher.

The president and his advisers assign the conquest of inflation to the Federal Reserve. They urge the Fed to slow money growth gradually and predictably until it is no faster than growth of goods and services, i.e., until it accommodates no inflation. Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker thought he was already on that path. But unless wage, cost, and price inflation subside concurrently, this is the "cold turkey" recipe, the same one that gave us the last two credit crunches and recessions. The administration wants a vigorous recovery instead. But as long as the wage and cost inflation proceeds untamed, financing a Reagan recovery will take more money and credit than Volcker wants to provide, and more than the administration says it wants the Fed to allow. The president may wish to compartmentalize the twin goals of disinflation and recovery, later blaming the Federal Reserve if he doesn't achieve both. But his failure to face the real conflict between them is the fatal flaw of his own program.

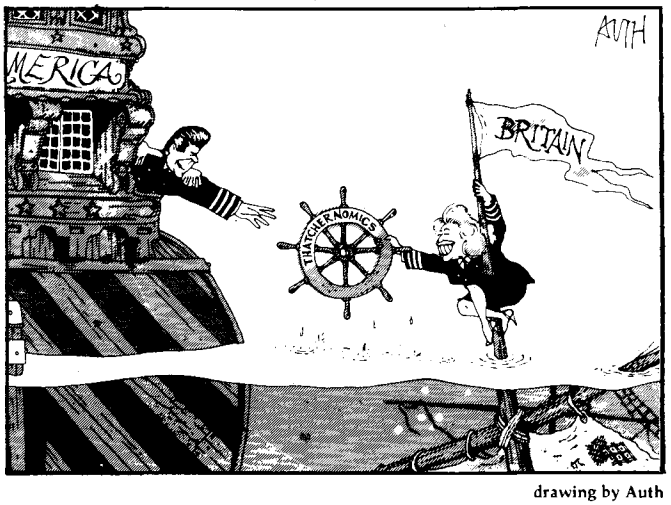
ADMINISTRATION spokesmen say as little as possible about such contradictions. But reporters perceptive enough to inquire have elicited a resolution of sorts. The program itself, the lower inflation projected in the scenario and the threat-promise of fiscal and monetary discipline, is supposed to diminish inflationary expectations and thus melt the hard core of wage and cost inflation directly, short-circuiting the painful discipline of Thatcherism. We say inflation will subside, so people will expect it to subside, so they will take smaller wage gains and boost prices more slowly, so inflation will subside.

If the strategy is drastic revision of expectations, the president and his economic team are doing their best to keep it secret from those on whose decisions and actions its success depends—not financial wizards in New York, Boston, and San Francisco but business managers, workers, union leaders in Worcester, Milwaukee, and San Diego. They don't know who Paul Volcker is or understand what targets for M1-A, M1-B, and M2 have to do with their sales and jobs. They have heard previous optimistic White House predictions of lower inflation, and they are likely to wait and see before they act. Placing the entire blame for stagflation on federal profligacy, President Reagan in effect has told the people that they have no role or responsibility in its solution except to bear cheerfully the budget cuts he is proposing. Symbolic of this message, one of his first acts as president was to dismantle the Council on Wage and Price Stability.

Our core inflation has resisted the three recessions since 1970 and has ratcheted up in the two recoveries. It is strongly entrenched in long-term wage contracts and perpetuated by catching up and leap-frogging as contracts are sequentially renegotiated. It is whistling in the dark to count on rapid erosion of the institutional patterns and expectations that sustain this inflation. A policy like Mrs. Thatcher's requires the government to convince the country of its willingness to endure the "cold turkey" cure for inflation if necessary and as long as necessary. The theory and the hope are that wage and cost inflation will melt quickly in the face of a "credible threat." The policy hasn't been tried in this country, and I fear its results would be as slow and uncertain here as in Britain, even if resolutely and clearly announced. The administration is not even making a good try.

President Reagan challenged skeptics of his program to come up with better alternatives, or else to shut up. He succeeded in muting criticism. The *New York Times*, for example, publicly shut up. Should critics of laetrile, alchemy, and astrology be silent because they can't claim alternative ways of curing cancer, synthesizing gold, and telling fortunes? Should those who see no clothes on the emperor be quiet for fear their eyes deceive them? The president vastly overstated the country's economic plight in his preparatory fireside speech of February 10, shamefully misusing statistics to make his case. He is advertising his medicine as a cure for the twin maladies of inflation and unemployment. Many of his patients would not want to swallow his pills if they were peddled just as antidotes to the Great Society.

Anyway, there is a better and surer way to attack stagflation. It is to organize a concerted mutual disinflation of wages, costs, and markups. Announce a schedule, for a transitional five-year period, of gradually declining wage-increase guideposts. Reward compliance with the guideposts by tax rebates to the workers, and to the employer as well if his markup percentage does not increase. These would offset increased payroll taxes and would be a constructive use of some of the tax revenue the administration proposes to give away by Kemp-Roth. Let the Federal Reserve announce and execute monetary policies that bring about, on a schedule consistent with the guideposts, a gradual reduction in the rate of growth of monetary demand for goods and services. A flexible tax-based incomes policy of this kind does not confine the economy to the straitjacket of all-out detailed con-



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trols. Concerted with monetary policy, it avoids the fatal flaw of some past incomes policies; it is not a substitute for monetary discipline and does not try to suppress inflationary symptoms of excess demand. It proposes to change embedded expectations and patterns by actual experience, not by wishful thinking or verbal threats and promises. Presidential leadership is required to assemble the consensus needed to support such a policy.

The ideology of the present administration firmly excludes any approach of this kind. The new president clearly has capacities for political leadership that we have not seen in the "bully pulpit" of the White House for many years. The country is in the mood for a new beginning. It is too bad the rare opportunity is being wasted, and far worse that it is being exploited to engineer a social counterrevolution.

James Tobin

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Q. What does it take to change Poland? A. Courage.

Solidarity Forever

by Abraham Brumberg

Thousands of words will be written about the powerful, self-confident, astute, and determined trade union movement that burst on the Polish scene in the summer of 1980, and no doubt we will be told (and rightly so) that there was really nothing mysterious about its genesis. Yet the fact remains that hardly anyone, either in Poland or elsewhere, had been so wise and prescient as to predict it. Many had passionately warned that Poland was rapidly approaching another catastrophe. Not only from the so-called "democratic opposition" that came into being after the labor unrest of June 1976, but also from sociologists, economists, writers, historians, and journalists who had little or no contact with the "dissidents," came ominous warnings that unless things changed, the country would face yet another upheaval, similar to those of 1956 and December 1970. This was the scenario: skies lit by the glow of burning party headquarters, police shooting at crowds of workers driven to revolt by empty stomachs and pockets and sustained in fury by the sight of bloated bureaucrats abandoning their villas to seek safety behind tanks and bayonets.

In retrospect, the learned analyses were remarkably on target. In the late autumn of 1979, for instance, and again a year later, a group of distinguished intellectuals (known as the Experience and Future Club) subjected the situation in their country to lethal criticism. "The current crisis in Poland," said one of their documents, "is essentially political and social; hence, the success of economic reforms [mandatory, the authors insisted] depends above all on changes in the way power is exercised and politics conducted." This meant that the population must no longer be fed with lies, that Poland's social inequalities must be eliminated, that the political system must be radically democratized, and that the society must be allowed to organize itself and shape its own affairs—in concert with the authorities, yet without challenging their right to govern.

Similar diagnoses and remedies were offered by other groups and individuals. In fact, by early 1980 Poland was teeming with compelling programs for change, all appearing nominally *sub rosa*, yet all widely known and discussed. But what if these proposals were not accepted (which of course they weren't)? Would the inevitable explosion be followed by an effort of various social groups—workers, peasants, intellectuals, students, professionals—to organize themselves and put an end to the endemic *polnische Wirtschaft* (Polish way)? Certainly no one would predict that about the workers. I was assured repeatedly when I was there two years ago that the workers were still cowed, still subject to manipulation and bribery, gripped on the one hand by fury, on the other hand by political paralysis.

"Madry Polak po szkodzie"—a Pole is wise after the fact—an old proverb has it. Now that the workers not only have organized themselves, but have succeeded in bringing about a well-nigh revolutionary transformation of the country—without setting a single building on fire, and (so far) without provoking bloody reprisals

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—Polish official newspapers are suddenly rife with exposés and retroactive wisdom. Thus we read in a recent issue of *Polityka*—Poland's most serious, candid, and frequently unorthodox political weekly, until last month edited by the new deputy prime minister, Mieczyslaw Rakowski—that Solidarity was "carried on the demographic wave of people who . . . have no programed fear of terror, since they remember neither the war nor the 1950s." Others, in an attempt to explain the newly discovered political acumen of the Polish working class, point to the years of educational work carried on by the Self-Defense Committee (KOR), especially through its newspaper, the *Worker*. Others point to lessons drawn from the gap between official propaganda and grim reality; to the level of literacy significantly higher than that of previous generations of workers (many of them peasants transplanted, pigs, geese, and all, to squalid urban centers), or to the lessons of prior abortive workers' uprisings. Yet others single out the importance of rising expectations, citing workers' real income growth in the early 1970s, when Gierek launched his program of industrialization financed by magnanimous Western bankers. Some analysts also have recalled that Polish trade-unionism has a long history, and others, of course, have pointed to the enormous influence of the Catholic church and of the various lay groups around it. "The social movement" (i.e., Solidarity), we read again in *Polityka*, is "marked by strong 'messianic' elements, apparent not only in the extreme religiousness of the strikers but also in the ideology of the movement, which sees itself as a force of social, political, and cultural reform."

THIS IS ALL true. But it must be emphasized once more that one would have been hard put to find such observations in the pre-1980 literature. "We have been stunned by the workers' movement," a well-known writer, Krzysztof Toeplitz, admitted in a recent issue of the literary weekly *Kultura*. Stunned indeed, for what happened in the summer of 1980 was altogether unprecedented.

But what is Solidarity like? How is it structured, how does it function, what has it accomplished thus far? The American press tends to concentrate on dramatic events: the unending confrontations, the exasperating negotiations with recalcitrant authorities, the dire warnings issued one day by government spokesmen, next day by Moscow's *Pravda*. And lately in the *Washington Post* the intrepid Oriana Fallaci managed to extract an admission from Lech Walesa that he, too, not unlike a former American president, is occasionally subject to lustful thoughts, his happy family life and daily Communion notwithstanding.

The continuing conflicts between Solidarity and the government are worrisome, symptomatic of the colossal difficulties inherent in this unique attempt at combining free institutions with single-party rule. The situation is dangerous and dramatic. And the personality of Lech Walesa helps make good copy. But there is more to Solidarity than that.

For one thing, Solidarity has transformed the old trade union movement. According to Zbigniew Gryszkiewicz, a lawyer and representative of Solidarity now in the US, the old Central Trade Union Council, basically representing craft unions, has virtually disintegrated, though vestiges remain. While thousands, and then hundreds of thousands, of rank-and-file members left the old unions and joined Solidarity, old-line trade-union officials, bent on retaining their salaries and perks, did whatever they could to persuade their members to stay. They broke away from the CTUC, reconstituted themselves as "independent self-governing unions," and embraced the principles of Solidarity—to little effect.

Why this happened is easy to understand. The functions of the old trade unions conformed to the classic Leninist definition of unions (still stubbornly repeated by Soviet newspapers in their jeremiads against Solidarity) as "transmission belts from the Communist Party to the masses," as "schools" with but one curriculum—that of "socialist construction." The official press now freely admits that in the eyes of the workers the old trade unions were nothing but yet another loathsome institution designed to make them work harder.

Here, for instance, are the words of Professor Antoni Rajkiewicz, not a member of KOR, not a representative of Solidarity, but one of the experts representing the government during the fateful Gdansk negotiations last summer:

> The pre-August unions had the monopoly on representing employee interests. On all organizational levels it was a highly centralized organization, bureaucratic and subjected to the party *apparat*. All the leading trade union posts were in the party *nomeklatura* [freely translated: the old-boy network]. Their first duty was (according to the constitution) to cooperate with the authorities in plan fulfillment. The defense of employees' interests was secondary . . . Democracy disappeared altogether.

According to the old trade-union bosses, of course, this was all a tragic blunder for which they bore no responsibility. In a revealing interview with several of the old union leaders, published in *Polityka* on February 7, we find the following exchange:

> *Official*: Why ascribe the mistakes and faults of the CTUC to us? The central organ was one thing, the trade unionists working on their own turf another. . . . Most of the points agreed upon in Gdansk . . . were not a discovery of Solidarity. We, too, had always fought for them—except for one point—the one about the creation of new trade unions.
>
> *Polityka*: A trifle.
>
> *Official*: One must state unequivocally that the point regarding the creation of "free trade unions" was explicitly political, and not of a trade union, workers' character. It would have sufficed to demand new elections, extraordinary meetings, a change in the statutes—in a word, precisely what we had been doing for the past half a year.

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Why, then, *Polityka*'s interlocutor went on relentlessly, did you fail where Solidarity succeeded? Because, came the reply, "we had no courage to reach for the most effective weapon—the strike." In other words, *Polityka* continued, "you were afraid to slam the fist down on the desk, and Solidarity was not?" This elicited the sanctimonious reply: "Only our sense of responsibility for the fate of the country prevented us from doing what you term slamming the fist down on the desk."

THE WORKERS abandoned those who worried so much about the "fate of their country" and flocked to the new unions. The old principle of craft organizations was jettisoned in favor of territorial unions, embracing workers in different professions and industries. Statutes were drafted and refined, an organizational structure was set up (starting with local bodies and ending with the National Commission with headquarters in Gdansk, and its 12-member presidium), and preparations were launched for elections of officials (now taking place).

According to Gryszkiewicz, "for several months all of our people worked without pay—spontaneously, enthusiastically, for the good of the cause." In October and November new organizational structures were erected at both the local level and the National Commission, he said. "This preparatory work was absolutely essential, of course, and now we are reaping its rewards. We are institutionalized, our officials receive their pay—incidentally, by law not higher than the medium pay of a shipyard worker—a rule that applies to Walesa as well. In Gdansk we now have between 70 and 80 paid officials. In the 40 regional committees the number of paid employees is, of course, smaller."

In the course of a long interview, Gryszkiewicz told me that Solidarity's finances mostly come from membership dues. "Our rates are the same as of the old unions," he said. "Each member pays one percent of his wages. At first we also took over yet another rule from the craft unions—namely, that one worker out of a thousand in a given enterprise can be a paid employee of the union. However, we soon decided that this made us somehow too dependent on management, and we decided not to use this provision." I asked him what became of the property of the old unions, their "social funds," their sanitariums, rest homes, offices, and so on. He said that since Solidarity is an absolutely new phenomenon, everything had to be negotiated. "Now the matter of rest homes and sanitariums, for instance, was something very important to us, but luckily we arrived at a sensible agreement with the authorities—namely, that all those institutions, which formerly belonged to the old trade unions, would now be declared government property, available for use by old and new trade union members alike." He said that some union offices are still occupied by officials of the old trade unions, but more and more of them are now being transferred to Solidarity.

What is the relationship like between factory directors and the new unions? I asked. He said that was certainly a difficult problem at first. "Most managers, used to the old regime, were not sure whether the unions were there to stay, and so their attitude varied from suspicion to outright hostility. However, in time most factory directors realized that they were in effect presented with an excellent opportunity to mend management-labor relations and improve the morale of the work force as well as increase productivity—which, I assure you, is in our interest no less than that of the authorities." In the last analysis, he said, "the management is pleased to work with real and dedicated trade union representatives, keen on solving all problems and reducing the potential for conflicts. I would say, then, that by now, certainly on the local level, relations are on the whole very good indeed."

I told him that this conflicts with impressions in the West that people in Poland are not working, but are continuously striking and attending meetings. He said such ideas aren't accurate. "In fact, since the morale in most factories has improved, productivity also has risen. I can tell you from my own experience—since I live in Gdansk—that the current plan for the Gdansk Shipyard was not only fulfilled, but exceeded our expectations."

I said, "You have received help from various Scandinavian trade union organizations—printing presses, paper, typewriters, and so on. Is that what you need, and is this why you are here in the United States?" Gryszkiewicz replied that printing presses and other such items "are by now our least worry. Nor do we want any money, any dollars." What Solidarity needs above all is medical help, he said. "Medications, surgical instruments, and the like. The state of our country's pharmacological industry is catastrophic. This has been officially admitted. Millions of people live on the edge of poverty, and in poor health. Our Ministry of Public Health is actually very much interested in Solidarity's efforts to secure more medications and parts for our hospitals, creches, rest homes, clinics, and so on. This is my primary task here in the States—to obtain medical help for our 10 million members and their families—not an insignificant portion of the population, as you can imagine."

GRYSZKIEWICZ confirmed reports that the workers had received valuable assistance from Polish intellectuals. One should note that the Polish movement is one in which the intellectuals are taking a supportive role, not a leading one. "When the strikes began last July," he said, "the response from various circles of our intelligentsia was enormous. One of the first groups of experts came from the Warsaw Club of Catholic Intelligentsia. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, editor of the Catholic monthly *Wiez* (Link), gathered a group of people around him, and came to Gdansk to offer their services. They were invaluable. Mazowiecki, as you know, will now be the editor of our weekly newspaper,

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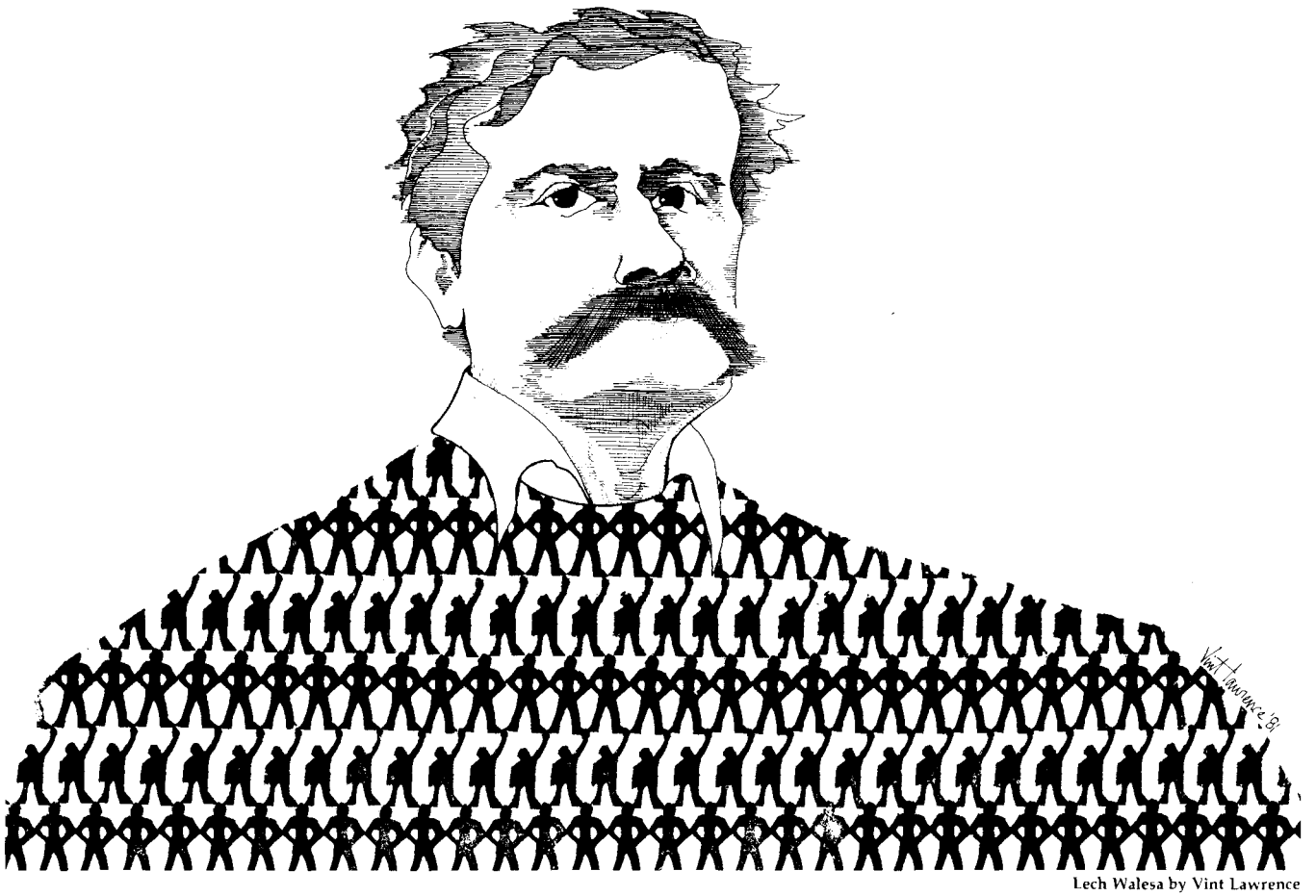

Lech Walesa by Vint Lawrence

which is finally to see the light of day by the end of the month. In time other groups came forward: from the Episcopate, from the Experience and Future circles, from the ranks of the democratic opposition [KOR]. We turn to them for advice on various legal problems, on organizational matters, on how to negotiate with the authorities. By now we have a wide network of experts, many in Gdansk, and in other cities as well."

I put it to him that some people claim that Solidarity is exceeding its mandate as trade union organization and beginning to play a political role. Is it true? "If it is," he said, "it's only because the conflict is between Solidarity and the government, which is by definition a political structure, but which in addition to that is also the ultimate employer, and the owner of the means of production." Some of the 21 points agreed upon in Gdansk may seem political too. The points include free access to the media, a new censorship law, the freeing of political prisoners, the demand for true information about the state of the economy and Poland's other social ills, the right of the trade unions to participate in any discussions regarding economic reforms, the abolition of special privileges for party officials—including special stores—and greater access to the media by the Catholic church. "These are all matters that concern us as human beings and as trade union members," said Gryszkiewicz—"the struggle for truth, for human dignity. Let me be quite categorical about it: we have not, in putting our demands to the authorities, exceeded by one iota the points that had been agreed upon in Gdansk and in the other documents signed last summer."

Besides Solidarity's troubles with the government, I asked him about its problems with its own members—those who sometimes demand too much, who are perhaps too impatient and zealous. "Yes," he replied, "but this problem, too, has been greatly exaggerated in the Western press. To be sure, Walesa sometimes travels through the country like a fireman putting out a fire here, a fire there. But you can take my word for it that the vast majority of Solidarity members are extraordinarily responsible, and that we shan't ever permit excessive demands to threaten our achievements. We want to be an ordinary trade union, which is perhaps rather difficult in a country like ours. But we are learning, the authorities are slowly learning, and I believe there is enough of a reservoir of goodwill and realism on both sides for our wishes to become reality."

The problems we touched upon in the interview do not begin to exhaust the problems faced by Solidarity and by Poland. Even with the best intentions, the party and government could hardly be expected to divest themselves of old habits and methods of rule—especially with Moscow and some of its allies, frightened and infuriated by the developments in Poland, breathing heavily down their backs and no doubt demanding that the party put its house in order—or

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else. No doubt, too, there are elements in the party that would go to virtually any lengths to nullify the gains made by Solidarity—and now by the farmers, the students, and other social groups. It is these pressures, from both within and without, that probably account for the new threats against KOR, the revolting if pathetic attempts to revive the old "anti-Zionist" slogans, and the accusations that Western powers are "meddling in Polish affairs." (Such charges, incidentally, are often derided in the Polish press.) The Polish economy, of course, remains in crisis, although it is significant that this has not led to disorders. Solidarity also faces internal problems, such as suspicions among some of its members that Walesa is merely a tool of the church and that the church is in collusion with the party—an accusation that gained some credence when the church's press spokesman, a few months ago, attacked by name some of KOR's members (objects of continuous attacks in the official press) for contributing to "chaos and anarchy" in the country. Later Cardinal Wyszynski reaffirmed his support for Solidarity and reiterated his unqualified opposition to political repression. Yet it is not to be ruled out that suspicions will rise again, given the church's continuous involvement as a mediator between Solidarity and the government, its tacit support of certain collaborationist Catholic groups, and the anti-clerical sentiments on the part of some of the members of the "democratic opposition."

Problems continue. Yet the achievements of Solidarity remain remarkable—its own morale and self-discipline and the perceptible growth of elements within the party (such as both the new premier, Wojciech Jaruzelski, and the deputy prime minister, Rakowski), who are clearly interested in resolving outstanding issues (censorship law and a new trade union code are the big ones) in as calm and constructive an atmosphere as possible. Will the voices of reason and realism prevail? No one can tell. In the meantime, in assessing the turbulent progress of the past few months, credit must be given to Solidarity for standing fast, for resisting intimidation on the one hand and extremism on the other, and above all for going ahead with the day-to-day business of erecting a free trade union movement in a system that never has known one.

With Reagan, too, what Riyadh wants, Riyadh gets.

New Salaams to the Saudis

by Steve Emerson

Rumors of the death of the Carter administration have been greatly exaggerated. The Reagan decision to acquiesce to Saudi Arabia's demands for offensive F-15 hardware means that one of the Carter administration's most short-sighted policies remains alive and well. It is ironic that the new administration, which campaigned promising to reassert American toughness abroad and to promote the national interest unapologetically, has accepted the policies of its predecessor so uncritically.

Reagan policy-makers undoubtedly believe that they have resolved the F-15 dilemma by giving Israel military credits to partially compensate for its increased vulnerability. And they view the sale as part of a new strategic emphasis on containing Soviet expansion in the Middle East, not unlike former secretary of state John Foster Dulles's application of the Truman Doctrine, which produced the short-lived Baghdad Pact among Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran in 1955.

It is unfortunate that the issue of an increased threat to Israeli security was the only argument against the sale that the administration considered. There are many others, including the absence of a sound military rationale for the equipment, perpetuation of an unhealthy American-Saudi relationship, the possibility of Saudi mischief in the Persian Gulf, and potential destabilizing effects on Saudi Arabia itself.

Lest anyone forget, during the 1978 congressional debate over the initial sale of 60 F-15s to Saudi Arabia, Carter administration officials imposed explicit and public restrictions on the sale of "any system or armaments that could increase the range or enhance the ground-attack capability of the F-15." It was specifically stipulated to Congress that the Saudis would not receive auxiliary fuel tanks, multiple ejection (bomb) racks, air-refueling capabilities, early warning radar planes (AWACS), or "all-aspect" AIM 9L ("Sidewinder") air-to-air missiles. Last year the former president reaffirmed these restrictions in numerous press

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interviews and in discussions with elected officials.

Citing new security considerations and changing circumstances, the Reagan administration now has granted immediate approval to the sale of the extra fuel tanks and Sidewinder missiles, to be followed by future approval of the advanced radar planes, mid-flight refueling capability, and, possibly, bomb racks. This approval only further entraps the US in a vicious cycle of escalating Mideast arms sales. And it perpetuates the pattern whereby the Saudis get what they want from the US by representing every request as a "litmus test" of American-Saudi relations. Instead of initiating a "new beginning," the Reagan administration has signaled willingness to endure an obsequious and inherently counterproductive relationship. The United States would be well advised to heed the advice of Egyptian president Sadat, who repeatedly has urged US officials to stop babying the Saudis and to demand that they respect our military and political interests.

DEVELOPING a healthy relationship with the Saudis depends on a clear-headed evaluation of what they do for us, and we for them. The Saudis supply 17 percent of the world's oil production, which is vital to the well-being of the Western economy. Saudi rulers pay a political price for keeping production up. Younger, more conservative princes (ironically, often Western-educated) charge that their elders are squandering the national patrimony. Also, by producing at rates commensurate with Western needs, the Saudis get accused by Islamic fundamentalists and Arab radicals of being allied with "infidels" and "imperialists."

But in setting their levels of oil production, the Saudis also are guided by self-interest. They need to prevent the collapse of the Western economy and devaluation of Saudi investments in the United States and the West. They don't want to induce the West to develop alternative energy supplies. They need money for their massive development and industrialization program, estimated to cost $270 billion over the next five years. And, in the end, they do not want to drive the West to military action to preserve its oil supply.

Saudi Arabia has reaped considerable rewards from its relationship with the United States. Since 1945 Washington has provided the House of Saud with a security umbrella against aggression from potential enemies—the Soviet Union, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, and Iran. Over the past six years, the US has sold more military equipment to Saudi Arabia than to any other non-NATO country, totaling more than $22 billion. In 1980 alone, Saudi purchases of American military equipment and construction amounted to about five billion dollars.

Saudi Arabia also derives vast quantities of non-military goods and services from the US—$23 billion worth between 1976 and 1980. American companies are heavily involved in building and running modern Saudi Arabia. Aramco alone employs over 10,000 American citizens to produce the kingdom's oil.

In short, each nation is compelled to depend upon the other. Given American superiority in military and technological fields, however, a strong case can be made that the Saudis are more dependent on us than we are on them. The United States imports 1.2 million barrels per day from Saudi Arabia. This is just one-sixth of all American oil imports and only six percent of America's total petroleum consumption of 16.7 mbd. The Saudis have an "oil weapon" all right, but its potency is more limited than Americans often realize.

For one thing, the Saudis do not have a limitless capacity to increase production to reward satisfactory behavior in the West. In April 1979 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued a detailed analysis of Saudi production and reserves based on subpoenaed documents from Exxon and Socal, two partners in Aramco. The report concluded that Saudi Arabian production is never likely to exceed 12 mbd, and that this level could be sustained only for 15 or 20 years before it started to decline. Because of reductions in projected recoverable reserves and rising costs of maintaining production, the report also indicated that Saudi Arabia might never raise its maximum sustainable capacity beyond the present 10 mbd. The fundamental conclusion of the Senate study was that Saudi Arabia produces its oil based on its own economic self-interest and on geological realities, and that "linkage" with the Arab-Israeli dispute never has been figured into production decisions. The *New York Times* twice reported that CIA analysts supported the report's findings.

There is evidence that even the October 1973 oil cutoff may have had geological and conservationist explanations. In any event, various oil experts maintain that actual production cutbacks were limited in duration and magnitude. US gas lines made the embargo seem successful, but according to MIT economist M. A. Adelman they were the product of the "explosive combination of controlled prices and no rationing. . . ."

FINALLY, an increasing number of Middle East oil economists believe that Saudi Arabia actually will be forced into raising its oil production to finance balance of payments deficits. Eliyahu Kanovsky, a visiting professor of economics at Queens College, has examined the Saudi economy and found deficits in 1977, 1978, and 1979. In order to meet massive capital development projects, and increased international economic needs, the kingdom may require a minimum production level, perhaps 8.5 mbd. According to *Business Week* Saudi government sources confirmed this assessment and said that sharp budget cutbacks would provoke greater economic and social dislocations than the social pains of development.

In short, "responsible" Saudi production and price levels—represented in the US as a political favor to the West—are actually the product of self-interest and will

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continue to hold unless there is a change of regime as in Iran. It can be argued that it is the US that contorts itself, including its own laws, to please the Saudis. One example is Northrup's control of the multi-billion-dollar modernization program of the Saudi Air Force, awarded without competitive bidding at Ridyadh's request. Similarly Saudi Arabia receives selective treatment in the operation of foreign military trust funds. Unlike any other foreign purchaser, Saudi Arabia makes deposits for military purchases in an interest-bearing account under an arrangement whereby the US would not be protected should Saudi Arabia decide to cancel its contracts, as Iran did.

SAUDI ARABIA also gets special treatment in State Department human rights reports, compiled annually for Congress. The 1981 report is so meticulously crafted that, even after citing stonings, beheadings, severances of the hand, a "heavy stress on obtaining confessions," and the lack of *habeas corpus* or the right to counsel, one still gets the impression that Saudi Arabia has not violated the standard of human rights that was judiciously applied elsewhere.

The Carter decision in 1978 not to fill the strategic petroleum reserve was an astonishing concession to the Saudis. Officially, Saudi Arabia professed a desire to prevent pressure for higher oil prices, but Americans close to the Saudis acknowledged that they also wanted to maintain US dependence on their oil. Congress finally forced the administration to resume filling the reserve. That the Saudis have not objected demonstrates that Carter's concession was unnecessary.

The 1978 sale of 60 F-15s to the Saudis was a major demonstration of Saudi political influence. Many senators voting to approve the sale conceded openly that they were doing so because of US dependence on Saudi oil and goodwill. The sale of 60 planes was approved despite a 1974 Pentagon recommendation and a 1978 Arms Control and Disarmament Agency report saying only 40 F-15s should be provided. A 1976 Defense Department reassessment advised the Saudis not to purchase F-15s at all, on the grounds that they could not assimilate them.

If the F-15 sale had resulted in Saudi support for American peace efforts in the Middle East—as promised by the Carter administration—then it might be argued that the United States had received a quid pro quo for the planes. But since Camp David, what has happened? At both Baghdad pan-Arab summits, the Saudis were instrumental in building a consensus for punishing President Sadat and for paying out billions to Jordan and Syria to stay out of the peace process. This year the Saudis led the Islamic nations in calling for a *jihad* against Israel.

Not only did the Saudis not deliver on their part of the quid pro quo, the Carter administration actually shifted its peace policy in Saudi Arabia's direction. How else can one explain Washington's attempts in 1979 to involve the PLO in peace negotiations? How else explain the effort to alter UN Resolution 242, when it had formed the cornerstone of the Camp David accords? And how else explain the counterproductive attempts to reach prematurely for a "comprehensive solution" at the expense of the Camp David accords and the repeated acquiesence to one-sided Security Council resolutions?

In spite of the record and its own public promises, it's likely that the Carter administration would have approved the new Saudi request for offensive ordnance. According to the biweekly *Middle East Policy Survey*, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown gave his personal commitment to Saudi defense minister Sultan that the kingdom's request would be fulfilled.

The Reagan administration thus inherited a difficult situation, but not an impossible one. It could have invoked the 1978 executive commitments in refusing the sale. But in consultations with Congress during the past three weeks, Reagan administration officials have parroted the same vague and superficial justifications that previously had been cited by the Carter administration. "If we don't sell them this equipment, then they will buy it elsewhere," goes one verse. Another maintains that the Saudis are a "force for stability and moderation in the Middle East." (The corollary is that Saudi Arabia's moderation would disappear if they are not granted their requests.) Yet another cites the security threat to Saudi Arabia, especially to the Eastern oil-producing provinces, but doesn't quite explain how Saudi Arabia would defend itself against the blows of the Soviet Union, Iraq, Iran, or the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The final line assures all concerned that Saudi Arabia never would use its F-15s, or transfer them for use, in direct combat against Israel.

A PREVIEW of this administration's embrace of previous policies was provided last month in Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger's maiden news conference. He expressed the American desire to bolster Saudi Arabia's security by providing the offensive F-15 equipment they had requested. When asked about the American commitment to Israel, Weinberger responded sympathetically to Israel's needs, maybe a bit too sympathetically, in offering to station troops in Israel.

Actually, it is Saudi Arabia that needs American troops, not Israel. With vulnerable oil fields, limited military capability, vast territory to defend (over 4,400 miles of coastline), and surrounded by military superior adversaries, Saudi Arabia must depend upon the American security umbrella. The closer American forces are to Saudi Arabia, the more protection they can provide.

But, it's argued, the Saudis are unwilling to become overtly identified with the United States (or any foreign power) for fear of inciting domestic resentment. Therefore the US has to sell the Saudis sophisticated

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weapons to use in protecting themselves. So goes the military justification for the F-15 sales. But key military questions have not been faced: from which potential adversary can Saudi Arabia realistically be expected to defend itself? What are the most likely situations in which the planes will be used? Can the Saudis absorb the weapons? What are the other potential effects generated by transforming the kingdom into a massive arms arsenal?

According to the 1980-81 annual report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and other sources, the balance of forces between Saudi Arabia and every one of its potential adversaries is overwhelmingly weighted against Saudi Arabia. This imbalance is further accentuated by the vast territory Saudi Arabia has to protect. No matter how many F-15s Saudi Arabia possesses, the kingdom always will be incapable of defending itself. The Saudis and Americans are both well aware that should the kingdom be subjected to an external attack, the Saudis would have to rely on American military forces to protect their oil fields from destruction. The creation of the American Rapid Deployment Force attests to the acceptance of this contingency.

If the F-15s have no credible defensive role, why do the Saudis want them? One answer is prestige. Another is that they may hope to acquire an offensive option. The F-15 is the most sophisticated fighter plane in the world, capable of challenging any other aircraft. When equipped with extra fuel tanks, advanced radar, and AIM 9L air-to-air missiles, the F-15 is capable of inflicting lethal damage 1,000 miles away from its takeoff point. It could fly from Saudi Arabia to anyplace in the Middle East and return.

HAVING ACQUIRED 60 F-15s and offensive enhancement gear, the Saudis may be tempted to use them. How? One possibility is to settle old scores with weaker Persian Gulf rivals such as Oman. Religious and tribal animosities characterize the Saudi-Omani relationship and, on more than one occasion, the Saudis have tried to occupy Oman's Buraimi Oasis. The Omanis themselves probably will be granted additional weapons by the United States, too. The US is in the process of creating a version of mutual assured destruction in the Persian Gulf, a kind of Mideast balance of terror.

What about the threat to Israel? Proponents of the sale discount the possibility of a direct Saudi attack because of the more destructive Israeli retaliatory capability. The logic of this thesis is sound, but logic does not always govern behavior in a region of the world where dying by the sword is preferred to political compromise. In the event of another Arab-Israeli war, it is naive to believe that Saudi Arabia could resist pressure to use its weapons against Israel, or to transfer its planes to some other Arab state. Saudi Arabia took part in three past Arab-Israeli wars, but its involvement was limited to support roles and joint maneuvers with Syria and Jordan. The important difference is that then the kingdom simply did not have the modern weaponry it now has at its disposal. The mere existence of the superior F-15s, hardly a secret, would generate overpowering demands upon the kingdom from both within and without for use in an actual *jihad* against Israel. In the past, the Israelis never have felt a military need to attack Saudi territory. But if they feared a new war with the Arabs was imminent, they would have a strong incentive to launch a preemptive strike to knock out the Saudi F-15 force.

IN ALL FAIRNESS, responsibility for fueling the arms race in the Middle East must be spread among several Western countries and Russia. The Saudis apparently will get 300 West German Leopard tanks and 200 British Tornado jets. Reportedly they have made a secret $3.4-billion agreement with France to buy ships and helicopters, and are negotiating to finance production of Mirage 4000 jets. The lure of recycling oil debts, lowering unit costs of weapons, and engendering goodwill have proven irresistible to the Europeans.

The dangers of an arms race are somewhat mitigated by reported Saudi inability to absorb such vast quantities of sophisticated weapons. A similar problem arose in Iran, yet the surplus cash skimmed off the top of the defense contracts ensured that the contracts continued. Multinational corruption in Saudi Arabia probably has not risen to the levels reached in Iran, but the issue of Saudi absorptive capacity should be a fundamental consideration in determining the feasibility of appropriate military sales. Is the US prepared to sanction the Saudis' use of Pakistani mercenaries to fight on their behalf?

Even more troubling are the negative domestic repercussions of the massive arms sales, an issue relating to the larger problem of internal Saudi instability. The strains caused by accelerated industrialization, accompanied by liberalization of the kingdom's social or political institutions, well may provoke a violent reaction against the regime. Add the factors of corruption, a large foreign presence, Islamic revivalism, class disparities, and Shia-Sunni and other intra-clan tensions (particularly in the oil regions), and the future looks even more ominous. On top of this, the impact of a massive arms infusion could prove disastrous. Many sectors of Saudi society, from religious ascetics to those with rising expectations about the benefits of oil wealth, may end up increasingly dissatisfied with an uneven development program that goes too far and simultaneously not far enough. A conspicuous arsenal of Western arms may create, as in Iran, an irritating reminder of the regime's wasting of precious, dwindling resources. No one can predict that massive internal insurrection will occur in Saudi Arabia, but it would be a tragic irony if sometime in the future American troops were forced to protect American interests from the ravages of American arms.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

A Classic and a Clinker

One surprise about *Oblomov* is that, as far as I can tell, it has never been filmed before. The name of the protagonist, as well as the generic "Oblomovism," has passed into several languages, yet this new Soviet picture is the first based on the book. A second surprise is that it's a good film: surprising chiefly because the previous work I've seen by Nikita Mikhalkov, the director—*A Slave of Love* (*TNR*, July 1, 1978)—was blatantly prettified. *Oblomov* isn't free of director's intrusions, but on the whole it's a moving, atmospherically authentic distillation of a great, highly significant novel. One byproduct of the picture's arrival may be to turn people to Goncharov's book; everyone knows his and its name, but many have it on their Must Read Some Time list.

Our hero—a ridiculous use of the term if ever there was one—is in his early 30s and lives in St. Petersburg in the 1850s on the income of a badly run estate which he rarely visits. What Oblomov does mostly is sleep. Or at least lie down. In his large, dowdy apartment, attended by a man servant, he reclines in his bed or on his sofa, calls for what he wants, grumbles when he gets it, overeats, and resists the efforts of friends to activate him.

But if that were all, Oblomov (accent his name on the second syllable) would be only a Gogol cartoon out of *The Inspector General*. What makes the novel as important as it is good is that it's one of the early appearances in European literature of the dramatic power of disaffection. It had been preceded by Musset's *Fantasio* and Büchner's *Leonce and Lena*. Russian critics have pointed out the connection with Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and the hero of Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*. What about Turgenev's *Diary of a Superfluous Man*? What about—ineluctably—*Waiting for Godot*?

Why then did the USSR decide to make a film on this theme—from a novel supremely embodying this theme? The answer may lie in the attitude that Soviet theaters often take toward Chekhov: that the plays describe a past lassitude and are therefore cautionary tales. This misguided belief about Chekhov *and* the Soviet present may be the ill wind that has blown to this film's good. Besides, the screenplay by Mikhalkov and Aleksander Adabashyan rearranges the material somewhat: the script begins with Oblomov as a small boy, cosseted by mommy on the country estate, and there are flashbacks throughout to this pampered boyhood. Possibly we are to infer that he was the spoiled scion of wealthy bourgeoisie: and that the encouragement of idleness in childhood leads, inevitably, to the sofa, literally or figuratively. Outside the Soviet paradigm, however, *Oblomov* poses less soluble questions.

As in the novel, the film is not simply about a man who won't get up and busy himself: it's about why he won't. He is convinced that any activity by him, any existence by him, doesn't much matter in the cosmic scheme—in fact, that there isn't much of a cosmic scheme. His life is futile and therefore may as well be unobtrusive to others and pleasant to himself. The one possibility for his life to be altered galvanically is his love for the young and beautiful Olga. It looks as if that love may be fulfilled: but the complications of self-doubt cede her to Oblomov's close friend, Stolz. (Another of those partly German Russians of the 19th century, like Tusenbach in *The Three Sisters*.) Oblomov sinks back into lethargy, eventually marries his housekeeper, has a son, and dies—rather, disappears *completely*. With an echo of the opening, the film ends with his little son running across fields to greet his mother. (Oddly, the child seems to run well over a mile—just to sustain the final image.) The inescapable implication is that Oblomov *fils* is headed eventually for the Oblomov sofa.

This isn't the emphasis of the book, though its sources are in Goncharov; still the film has lovely flavor and nicely muted poignancy. When Mikhalkov relaxes, when he isn't fretting to be visually inventive by moving the camera in or out without necessity, when he isn't searching for an odd angle—in short, when he relies on his actors and his story—the picture holds well. Occasionally he can put invention really at the service of the story. Near the end, in the Stolz home, there's a shot with Stolz at his desk in another room, left background, his wife Olga sewing in a close room, foreground, and an old friend in the room with her, right background. The triangle, involving two rooms, fixes an old relationship by means of the arrangement of space.

As in all Soviet films, the color ranges from the dull to the insufficiently clarified gorgeous. The music is good; early on, Olga, an amateur singer, does Norma's "Casta diva" after dinner, and it finds its way onto the sound track as a binding theme.

Elena Solovei, who was the heroine of *A Slave of Love*, is Olga, winning and puzzled and vulnerable—much more appealing than she was in the earlier

Films Worth Seeing

Les Bons Débarras (Good Riddance). Exceptional French-Canadian film about a 13-year-old girl's unscrupulous fight to preserve the love between her mother and herself.

Kagemusha. Akira Kurosawa's epic of 16-century Japanese wars. If not his best, still very fine.

One Wild Moment. The wild moment—between a 44-year-old man and his friend's 17-year-old daughter—leads to profound if unavoidably comic complications.

Raging Bull. An Italian-American boxer fills the screen with modulated but incessant fury. Power.

SK

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film. Yuri Bogatyrev is staunch and generous as Stolz, a friend in the full 19th-century sense. Inevitably the picture depends on Oblomov, and Oleg Tabakov is excellent. He gets the prosaic but real yearning, the insufficient confidence without silliness, the pudgy but delicate dignity that make him withdraw from what Robert Penn Warren calls the "slur of the world's weather." *Oblomov* had to wait surprisingly long for filming: now that the film is here, it will remain.

For a time—a short time—I thought that *All Night Long* was going to be another distant descendant of *Oblomov*. Gene Hackman is a middle-aged middling executive in the head office of a supermarket chain who blows his stack with his boss, for an unspecified reason, and who is demoted to night manager of one of the stores. Hackman's attitude throughout is that of a calm, amused, unsurprisable but deeply feeling spectator of his own life. His forbearance with the shortcomings of human beings, including his 18-year-old spacey son and his prim, trim wife, including himself, is quite engaging and funny.

Then he accidentally discovers that his son is having an affair with the wife (Barbra Streisand) of a fireman, a distant relative. Up to that point and intermittently thereafter W. D. Richter's script has a good deal of wry observation of living and working in the US today. It also has much accuracy about Hackman's acceptance of his place in life, his wish to get through it rather than conquer it, his tolerance, his sources of enjoyment. But then comes the Star Role and a lot of flapdoodle. Streisand (who doesn't sing in this one, a bad decision) is a tarty, platform-soled, good-hearted, lickerish, dyed blonde who, having had the son, sets her cap (ho ho) for the father. No reason, physical or otherwise, is clear as to why Hackman should respond, particularly in those circumstances. Streisand looks and acts like a grotesque who ought to repel the Hackman who has been previously established. And to satisfy the Star Role, the script then goes through agonies of accommodation—trying to encompass some old-fashioned movie nonsense in a script that has set a tone of intelligence.

Diane Ladd has the right grapefruit-and-dry-toast look and manner as the wife. Dennis Quaid is amiably goofy as the son. Kevin Dobson plays the traduced fireman with comic timing as nice as Hackman's. Jean-Claude Tramont, the director, at least lets them use that sense of timing. But Part Two of this script insults Part One.

A conversation with Toni Morrison.

'The Language Must Not Sweat'

by Thomas LeClair

Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* was published in 1977 to unreserved praise; American readers had found a new voice. The plot of the novel, a young man's search for a nourishing folk tradition, was familiar from other Afro-American books, but Morrison's fireside manner—composed yet simple, commanding yet intimate—gives the novel a Latin American enchantment. Reading backward through *Sula* (1973) to Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1969), one sees her trying out different versions of what she calls her "address," rehearsing on more modest subjects the tone and timbre that give original expression to the large cultural materials in *Song of Solomon*.

How and why she arrived at that special voice were the questions that brought me to Toni Morrison's busy office at Random House (where she is an editor) just after she finished *Tar Baby*. Although our interview was interrupted several times, when Toni Morrison started talking about writing she achieved remarkable concentration and intensity. This—not editorial business or author small talk—was clearly where she lived. No matter what she discussed—her loyalty to the common reader, her eccentric characters, her interest in folklore—her love of language was the subtext and constant lesson of her manner. She *performs* words. Gertrude Stein said poetry was "caressing nouns." Toni Morrison doesn't like to be called a poetic writer, but it is her almost physical relation to language that allows her to tell the old stories she feels are best.

* * *

Thomas LeClair: You have said you would write even if there were no publishers. Would you explain what the process of writing means to you?

Toni Morrison: After my first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, writing became a way to be coherent in the world. It became necessary and possible for me to sort out the past, and the selection process, being disciplined and guided, was genuine thinking as opposed to simple response or problem-solving. Writing was the only work I did that was for myself and by myself. In the process, one exercises sovereignty in a special way. All sensibilities are engaged, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes sequentially. While I'm writing, all of my experience is vital and useful and possibly important. It may not appear in the work, but it is valuable. Writing gives me what I think dancers have on stage in their relation to gravity and space and time. It is energetic and balanced, fluid and in repose. And there is always the possibility of growth; I could never hit the highest note so I'd never have to stop. Writing has for me everything that good work ought to have, all the criteria. I love even the drudgery, the revision, the proofreading. So even if publishing did grind to a halt, I would continue to write.

LeClair: Do you understand the process more and more with each novel that you write?

Morrison: At first I wrote out of a very special place in me, although I did not understand what that place was or how to get to it deliberately. I didn't trust the writing that came from there. It did not seem writerly enough. Sometimes what I wrote from that place remained sound, even after enormous revision, but I would regard it as a fluke. Then I learned to trust that part, learned to rely on that part, and I learned how to get there faster than I had before. That is, now I don't have to write 35 pages of throat-clearing in order to be where I wish to be. I don't mean that I'm an

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inspired writer. I don't wait to be struck by lightning and don't need certain slants of light in order to write, but now after my fourth book I can recognize the presence of a real idea and I can recognize the proper mode of its expression. I must confess, though, that I sometimes lose interest in the characters and get much more interested in the trees and animals. I think I exercise tremendous restraint in this, but my editor says "Would you stop this *beauty* business." And I say "Wait, wait until I tell you about these ants."

LeClair: How do you conceive of your function as a writer?

Morrison: I write what I have recently begun to call village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe. Peasant literature for *my* people, which is necessary and legitimate but which also allows me to get in touch with all sorts of people. I think long and carefully about what my novels ought to do. They should clarify the roles that have become obscured; they ought to identify those things in the past that are useful and those things that are not; and they ought to give nourishment. I agree with John Berger that peasants don't write novels because they don't need them. They have a portrait of themselves from gossip, tales, music, and some celebrations. That is enough. The middle class at the beginning of the industrial revolution needed a portrait of itself because the old portrait didn't work for this new class. Their roles were different; their lives in the city were new. The novel served this function then, and it still does. It tells about the city values, the urban values. Now my people, we "peasants," have come to the city, that is to say, we live with its values. There is a confrontation between old values of the tribes and new urban values. It's confusing. There has to be a mode to do what the music did for blacks, what we used to be able to do with each other in private and in that civilization that existed underneath the white civilization. I think this accounts for the address of my books. I am not explaining anything to anybody. My work bears witness and suggests who the outlaws were, who survived under what circumstances and why, what was legal in the community as opposed to what was legal outside it. All that is in the fabric of the story in order to do what the music used to do. The music kept us alive, but it's not enough anymore. My people are being devoured.

Toni Morrison by Jack Coughlin

Whenever I feel uneasy about my writing, I think: what would be the response of the people in the book if they read the book? That's my way of staying on track. Those are the people for whom I write.

As a reader I'm fascinated by literary books, but the books I wanted to write could not be only, even merely, literary or I would defeat my purposes, defeat my audience. That's why I don't like to have someone call my books "poetic," because it has the connotation of luxuriating richness. I wanted to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power. That calls for a language that is rich but not ornate.

LeClair: What do you mean by "address"?

Morrison: I stand with the reader, hold his hand, and tell him a very simple story about complicated people. I like to work with, to fret, the cliché, which is a cliché because the experience expressed in it is important: a young man seeks his fortune; a pair of friends, one good, one bad; the perfectly innocent victim. We know thousands of these in literature. I like to dust off these clichés, dust off the language, make them mean whatever they may have meant originally. My genuine criticism of most contemporary books is that they're not *about* anything. Most of the books that are about something—the books that mean something—treat old ideas, old situations.

LeClair: Does this mean working with folklore and myth?

Morrison: I think the myths are misunderstood now because we are not talking to each other the way I was spoken to when I was growing up in a very small town. You knew everything in that little microcosm. But we don't live where we were born. I had to leave my town to do my work here; it was a sacrifice. There is a certain sense of family I don't have. So the myths get forgotten. Or they may not have been looked at carefully. Let me give you an example: the flying myth in *Song of Solomon*. If it means Icarus to some readers, fine; I

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want to take credit for that. But my meaning is specific: it is about black people who could fly. That was always part of the folklore of my life; flying was one of our gifts. I don't care how silly it may seem. It is everywhere—people used to talk about it, it's in the spirituals and gospels. Perhaps it was wishful thinking—escape, death, and all that. But suppose it wasn't. What might it mean? I tried to find out in *Song of Solomon*.

In the book I've just completed, *Tar Baby*, I use that old story because, despite its funny, happy ending, it used to frighten me. The story has a tar baby in it which is used by a white man to catch a rabbit. "Tar baby" is also a name, like nigger, that white people call black children, black girls, as I recall. Tar seemed to me to be an odd thing to be in a Western story, and I found that there is a tar lady in African mythology. I started thinking about tar. At one time, a tar pit was a holy place, at least an important place, because tar was used to build things. It came naturally out of the earth; it held together things like Moses's little boat and the pyramids. For me, the tar baby came to mean the black woman who can hold things together. The story was a point of departure to history and prophecy. That's what I mean by dusting off the myth, looking closely at it to see what it might conceal. . . .

LeClair: Do you think it's risky to do this kind of writing?

Morrison: Yes. I think I can do all sorts of writing, including virtuoso performances. But what is hard for me is to be simple, to have uncomplex stories with complex people in them, to clean the language, really clean it. One attempts to slay a real dragon. You don't ever kill it, but you have to choose a job worth the doing. I think I choose hard jobs for myself, and the opportunity to fail is always there. I want a residue of emotion in my fiction, and this means verging upon sentimentality, or being willing to let it happen and then draw back from it. Also, stories seem so old-fashioned now. But narrative remains the best way to learn anything, whether history or theology, so I continue with narrative form.

LeClair: In the kind of fiction you have described, isn't there a danger that it will be liked for something it is not? Are you ever worried about that?

Morrison: No. The people who are not fastidious about reading may find my fiction "wonderful." They are valuable to me because I am never sure that what they find "wonderful" in it isn't really what is valuable about it. I do hope to interest people who are very fastidious about reading. What I'd really like to do is appeal to both at the same time. Sometimes I feel that I do play to the gallery in *Song of Solomon*, for example, because I have to make the reader look at people he may not wish to look at. You don't look at Pilate. You don't really look at a person like Cholly in *The Bluest Eye*. They are always backdrops, stage props, not the main characters in their own stories. In order to look at them in fiction, you have to hook the reader, strike a certain posture as narrator, achieve some intimacy.

LeClair: As an editor, you look for quality in others' work. What do you think is distinctive about your fiction? What makes it good?

Morrison: The language, only the language. The language must be careful and must appear effortless. It must not sweat. It must suggest and be provocative at the same time. It is the thing that black people love so much—the saying of words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them. It's a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher's: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself. The worst of all possible things that could happen would be to lose that language. There are certain things I cannot say without recourse to my language. It's terrible to think that a child with five different present tenses comes to school to be faced with those books that are less than his own language. And then to be told things about his language, which is him, that are sometimes permanently damaging. He may never know the etymology of Africanisms in his language, not even know that "hip" is a real word or that "the dozens" meant something. This is a really cruel fallout of racism. I know the standard English. I want to use it to help restore the other language, the lingua franca.

The part of the writing process that I fret is getting the sound without some mechanics that would direct the reader's attention to the sound. One way is not to use adverbs to describe how someone says something. I try to work the dialogue down so the reader has to

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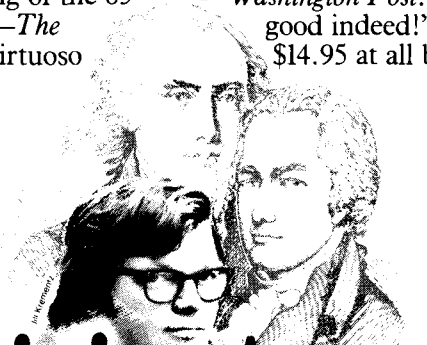

Explaining America: The Federalist

BY THE AUTHOR OF INVENTING AMERICA

Garry Wills

* Alan Wolfe, *Newsday*

DOUBLEDAY

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hear it. When Eva in *Sula* sets her son on fire, her daughter runs upstairs to tell her, and Eva says "Is?" you can hear every grandmother say "Is?" and you know: a) she knows what she's been told; b) she is not going to do anything about it; and c) she will not have any more conversation. That sound is important to me.

LeClair: Not all readers are going to catch that.

Morrison: If I say "Quiet is as kept," that is a piece of information which means exactly what it says, but to black people it means a big lie is about to be told. Or someone is going to tell some graveyard information, who's sleeping with whom. Black readers will chuckle. There is a level of appreciation that might be available only to people who understand the context of the language. The analogy that occurs to me is jazz: it is open on the one hand and both complicated and inaccessible on the other. I never asked Tolstoy to write for me, a little colored girl in Lorain, Ohio. I never asked Joyce not to mention Catholicism or the world of Dublin. Never. And I don't know why I should be asked to explain your life to you. We have splendid writers to do that, but I am not one of them. It is that business of being universal, a word hopelessly stripped of meaning for me. Faulkner wrote what I suppose could be called regional literature and had it published all over the world. It is good—and universal—because it is specifically about a particular world. That's what I wish to do. If I tried to write a universal novel, it would be water. Behind this question is the suggestion that to write for black people is somehow to diminish the writing. From my perspective, there are only black people. When I say "people," that's what I mean. Lots of books written by black people about black people have had this "universality" as a burden. They were writing for some readers other than me.

LeClair: One of the complaints about your fiction in both the black and white press is that you write about eccentrics, people who aren't representative.

Morrison: This kind of sociological judgment is pervasive and pernicious. "Novel A is better than B or C because A is more like most black people really are." Unforgivable. I am enchanted, personally, with people who are extraordinary because in them I can find what is applicable to the ordinary. There are books by black writers about ordinary black life. I don't write them. Black readers often ask me, "Why are your books so melancholy, so sad? Why don't you ever write about something that works, about relationships that are healthy?" There is a comic mode, meaning the union of the sexes, that I don't write. I write what I suppose could be called the tragic mode in which there is some catharsis and revelation. There's a whole lot of space in between, but my inclination is in the tragic direction. Maybe it's a consequence of my being a classics minor.

Related, I think, is the question of nostalgia. The danger of writing about the past, as I have done, is romanticizing it. I don't think I do that, but I do feel that people were more interesting then than they are now. It seems to me there were more excesses in women and men, and people accepted them as they don't now. In the black community where I grew up, there were eccentricity and freedom, less conformity in individual habits—but close conformity in terms of the survival of the village, of the tribe. Before sociological microscopes were placed on us, people did anything and nobody was run out of town. I mean, the community in *Sula* let her stay. They wouldn't wash or bury her. They protected themselves from her, but she was part of the community. The detritus of white people, the rejects from the respectable white world, which appears in *Sula* was in our neighborhood. In my family, there were some really interesting people who were willing to be whatever they were. People permitted it, perhaps because in the outer world the eccentrics had to be a little servant person or low-level factory worker. They had an enormous span of emotions and activities, and they are the people I remember when I go to write. When I go to colleges, the students say "Who are these people?" Maybe it's because now everybody seems to be trying to be "right."

LeClair: Naming is an important theme in *Song of Solomon*. Would you discuss its significance?

Morrison: I never knew the real names of my father's friends. Still don't. They used other names. A part of that had to do with cultural orphanage, part of it with the rejection of the name given to them under circumstances not of their choosing. If you come from Africa, your name is gone. It is particularly problematic because it is not just *your* name but your family, your tribe. When you die, how can you connect with your ancestors if you have lost your name? That's a huge psychological scar. The best thing you can do is take another name which is yours because it reflects something about you or your own choice. Most of the names in *Song of Solomon* are real, the names of musicians for example. I used the biblical names to show the impact of the Bible on the lives of black people, their awe of and respect for it coupled with their ability to distort it for their own purposes. I also used some pre-Christian names to give the sense of a mixture of cosmologies. Milkman Dead has to learn the meaning of his own name and the names of things. In African languages there is no word for yam, but there is a word for every variety of yam. Each thing is separate and different; once you have named it, you have power. Milkman has to experience the elements. He goes into the earth and later walks its surface. He twice enters water. And he flies in the air. When he walks the earth, he feels a part of it, and that is his coming of age, the beginning of his ability to connect with the past and perceive the world as alive.

LeClair: You mentioned the importance of sound before. Your work also seems to me to be strongly visual and concerned with vision, with seeing.

Morrison: There are times in my writing when I cannot move ahead even though I know exactly what will happen in the plot and what the dialogue is because I don't have the scene, the metaphor to begin with. Once I can see the scene, it all happens. In *Sula*, Eva is waiting for her long lost husband to come back. She's not sure how she's going to feel, but when he leaves he toots the horn on his pear-green Model-T Ford. It goes "ooogah, ooogah," and Eva knows she hates him. My editor said the car didn't exist at the time, and I had a lot of trouble rewriting the scene because I had to have the color and the sound. Finally, I had a woman in a green dress laughing a big-city laugh, an alien sound in that small-town street, that stood for the "ooogah" I couldn't use. In larger terms, I thought of *Sula* as a cracked mirror, fragments and pieces we have to see independently and put together. In *Bluest Eye* I used the primer story, with its picture of a happy family,

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as a frame acknowledging the outer civilization. The primer with white children was the way life was presented to the black people. As the novel proceeded I wanted that primer version broken up and confused, which explains the typographical running together of the words.

LeClair: Did your using the primer come out of the work you were doing on textbooks?

Morrison: No. I was thinking that nobody treated these people seriously in literature and that "these people" who were not treated seriously were me. The interest in vision, in seeing, is a fact of black life. As slaves and ex-slaves, black people were manageable and findable, as no other slave society would be, because they were black. So there is an enormous impact from the simple division of color—more than sex, age, or anything else. The complaint is not being seen for what one is. That is the reason why my hatred of white people is justified and their hatred for me is not. There is a fascinating book called *Drylongso* which collects the talk of black people. They say almost to a man that you never tell a white person the truth. He doesn't want to hear it. Their conviction is they are neither seen nor listened to. They also perceive themselves as morally superior people because they do *see*. This helps explain why the theme of the mask is so important in black literature and why I worked so heavily with it in *Tar Baby*.

LeClair: Who is doing work now that you respect?

Morrison: I don't like to make lists because someone always gets left out, but in general I think the South American novelists have the best of it now. My complaint about letters now would be the state of criticism. It's following post-modern fiction into self-consciousness, talking about itself as though it were the work of art. Fine for the critic, but not helpful for the writer. There was a time when the great poets were the great critics, when the artist was the critic. Now it seems that there are no encompassing minds, no great critical audience for the writer. I have yet to read criticism that understands my work or is prepared to understand it. I don't care if the critic likes or dislikes it. I would just like to feel less isolated. It's like having a linguist who doesn't understand your language tell you what you're saying. Stanley Elkin says you need great literature to have great criticism. I think it works the other way around. If there were better criticism, there would be better books.

A Novel of Exile and Home

Tar Baby
by Toni Morrison

(Knopf; $11.95)

Each of the characters in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* comes with a history, quite a complete history that is given to us in a series of stunning performances. Morrison has a dossier on every man and woman she admits to the sacred company of her fiction. It becomes apparent, as we read on from *Sula* to *Song of Solomon* to this fine new novel, that she feels it is not only her writerly duty but her great pleasure to give us the details of each life in a grand summation.

So with Valerian Street, an odd but reasonable man retired to Isle des Chevaliers in the Caribbean, we are taken back to the childhood of a rich orphan who inherits a candy company. It would have to be a candy company—the very sweetness of the enterprise works in *Tar Baby*. Valerian's town is suffused with the smell of candy, a coating of nostalgia for all who grow up there, and the business is run with an enlightened liberalism. Though that happy empire has been left behind, we must know it and all its charms as well as its strictures so that we will know why this man lives in exile in a dream house of his design. The work assigned to him is done and he is free to sit in his air-conditioned green house, Bach on the stereo, a civ-

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ilized outpost in an unreal world where all the choices are of his making.

There he lives, in the house called L'Arbe de la Croix, with his ditsy wife, Margaret—the Principal Beauty of Maine. And her story, well, it's equally wonderful: the poor girl with only her spectacular looks and the good fortune to be riding down the street on a float holding a polar bear's paw when Valerian passed through town. What kind of world have we entered when the Candy King chooses Miss Maine for his mate and when their house guest many years later is Jadine, an exquisite PhD, model, movie star, niece to the faithful black couple who attend to the Street's every need? A world of contrivance, a playful world that we once believed in—and for the most part in *Tar Baby* Toni Morrison makes us believe in it still.

The very flora and fauna of the island are alive, whispering, murmuring, nodding their commentary on the stories that are being played out in the dazzling sun. I know of no other landscapes in contemporary fiction that breathe like Morrison's except perhaps the animated bush country of Patrick White's Australia. Such exotic seetings may seem magically evoked and can lend themselves to the fabulous tale.

> Poor insulated, brokenhearted river. Poor demented stream. Now it sat in one place like a grandmother and became a swamp the Haitians called Sein de Veilles. And witch's tit it was: a shriveled fogbound oval seeping with a thick black substance that even mosquitoes could not live near.

This is both an elegant and a horrifying way for us to see the river cruelly diverted by men, but it is a risky business letting the butterflies speak and the wind pass judgment. Though it can come perilously close to Disney, the animation works most of the time in this novel to reinforce our sense of the storybook island on which the wealthy white liberals, the chic, educated black beauty, and the Uncle Toms can face each other simply. Toni Morrison gives us the children's story and just when we are most delighted, she takes it away.

To begin with, *Tar Baby* is all so much fun: the rich in the sun; the snappy talk in the servants' quarters; the glamour of Jadine Childs, a sort of honey-colored Rosalind Russell, bored with all her success, knowing she should think seriously about herself. Then we get our hero, a big black man who's jumped ship, young, handsome—tarnished but sterling. For some days he steals chocolate candy from the kitchen to survive, then hides in Margaret Street's closet where she finds him "literally, literally a nigger in the wood pile."

The literal can be shamefully amusing. The Marx Brothers kept up laughing with it and Ibsen takes our breath away when Hilda Wangel, "youth," comes actually knocking at the Master Builder's door. In *Tar Baby* the black fugitive is just what these feckless island people need—Jadine with her modish problem of inauthenticity, Margaret's anxious aging, Valerian's eccentric rule —someone to shock them out of the trivia of their days, their petty decisions, their witty conversations. At breakfast the Street's repartee falls halfway between Noel Coward and Strindberg. We seem to be involved not only in a tale of wonders but in a brittle comedy of manners, a smart script (many of the scenes in *Tar Baby* play beautifully). The Streets have just argued about the possibility of their sweet, alienated son coming home for Christmas when the intruder is discovered: his name is Son. There's the added hilarity of Jadine's edge of jealousy that the gorgeous man—thief, rapist?—who cleans up so nicely is not found crouching in *her* closet.

AS THE black American prince, Son charms almost everyone in sight, but the tone of the novel changes. It is grown-up time. Given a son, a lover, an adversary, the slick surface at L'Arbe de la Croix is scraped away. Personal history gives way to confession. The bickering games between husband and wife, servant and master, become confrontations. It is revealed that the battle for the soul of Street's son began when he was an infant and that Margaret was guilty of the most primitive torture while Ondine, the black cook, protected the boy—her missionary work among the aborigines. But nothing is black and white (or the reverse) in *Tar Baby*, as the fable dissolves. Valerian and Margaret gain a reality: he is dazed by the guilt of his past innocence; she is shriven, competent, and tenderly ministering to her husband in his decline. Though Sidney and Ondine, the old-fashioned "live-in" couple, do not change their roles (they cannot), there is a shift in power and the black servant's final dialogues with Valerian are menacing, Pinteresque.

Meanwhile, and it is a decidedly melodramatic meanwhile, Jadine and Son have escaped to New York, there to make love grandly, to begin new lives. I don't believe in their idyll. Perhaps I am supposed to know it's too good to be true, absolutely doomed. Jadine with her worldly credentials cannot live with a poor boy from Florida. Here I think Morrison depends heavily on an elevated prose, an incantation that insists upon the lovers' passionate union and later upon their equally passionate parting. In one sense they are talked about too much; in another they simply talk too much. Son and Jadine come at each other like running commentaries on black men and black women, on education, debt, freedom. It is the only dull part of this serious and mostly entertaining novel.

The *longueur* of the love story is relieved by a nicely rendered interlude set in Son's hometown, Eloe. Jadine among the hicks in her cashmere sweater and Charcrel boots is a touching sight. The stifling little shacks are more foreign to her than the hotel-like splendor of L'Arbe de la Croix. The perfect couple become an unlikely pair. Of course, we cannot help but see that their problems are real and at times their invective cuts deep. Jadine says:

> It's not romantic. And it's not being free. It's dumb. You think you're above it, above money, the rat race and all that. But you're not above it, you're just without it. It's a prison, poverty is. Look at what its absence made you do: run, hide, steal, lie.

It is true that Son romanticizes the poor and the ignorant and all the soothing sacrificial black women of his past that Jadine can never be. But he is right, too, when he rails at her: "And you? Where have you lived? Anybody ask you where you from, you give them five towns. You're not *from* anywhere. I'm from Eloe." And he is right again when he begins to taunt her, instructively, with the story of "Tar Baby."

Thematically, this novel is much tighter than Morrison's earlier works. Except for the love affair which seems to me rhetorical and overstated, the stories do not meander or pull away from the central vision of a modern world which offers the thinness of exile and denies us the comforts of home. Valerian believes that his son was "a typical anthropologist, a cultural orphan who sought other cultures he could love without risk of pain." It is not easy to belong anywhere and we cannot be daughters and sons in the old style. Michael Street, the off-stage boy, for all the abuse done him, makes it into an

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THE FASTEST GROWING CHURCH IN THE WORLD

by Brother Keith E. L'Hommedieu, D.D.

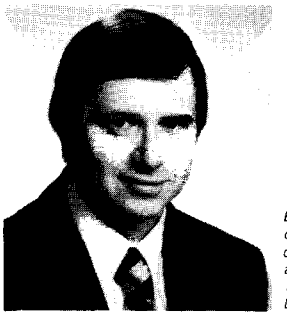
It's quite safe to say that of all the organized religious sects on the current scene, one church in particular stands above all in its unique approach to religion. The Universal Life Church is the only organized church in the world with no traditional religious doctrine. In the words of Kirby J. Hensley, founder, "The ULC only believes in what is right, and that all people have the right to determine what beliefs are right for them, as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others."

Reverend Hensley is the leader of the worldwide Universal Life Church with a membership now exceeding 7 million ordained ministers of all religious beliefs. Reverend Hensley started the church in his garage by ordaining ministers by mail. During the 1960's, he traveled all across the country appearing at college rallies held in his honor where he would perform mass ordinations of thousands of people at a time. These new ministers were then exempt from being inducted into the armed forces during the undeclared Vietnam war.

In 1966 Reverend Hensley was fighting the establishment on another front. The IRS tried to claim the ULC wasn't a legal church and proceeded to impound the ten thousand dollars in the church bank account. The feisty Hensley filed suit against the IRS in federal district court for return of the funds and to permanently establish the ULC as a legal tax exempt entity. On March 1, 1974 Judge James F. Battin ruled against the IRS in his decision which stated, "Neither this court or any branch of this government will consider the merits or fallacies of a religion. Nor will the court praise or condemn a religion. Were the court to do so, it would impinge upon the guarantees of the First Amendment." The judge then ordered the IRS to return the impounded money and to grant the Universal Life Church its tax exempt status.

Reverend Hensley has stated that he believes a church is people and not just a fancy building. He also believes in total freedom and equality for all people. The ULC will ordain anyone without regard to religious beliefs, race, nationality, sex or age.

The ULC's success formula is both effective and unquestionably legal. After a person has become an ordained minister, he or she can join with two other people and form their own Universal Life Church. These three people then make up the Board of Directors consisting of a Pastor, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The ULC will then grant the group the use of its legal church charter complete with both federal and state tax exempt numbers. The newly formed church may then open a bank account in the church's name. Any member of the church can legally donate up to 50% of his or her outside income to the church and take a corresponding tax deduction. The church in turn can pay the complete housing cost of its minister including rent or mortgage payment, insurance, taxes, furnishings and repairs. The church can also provide the minister with full use of an automobile as well as pay for travel and educational expenses. None of these expenses are reported as income to the IRS. Recently a whole town in Hardenburg, New York became Universal Life ministers and turned their homes into religious retreats and monasteries thereby relieving themselves of property taxes, at least until the state tries to figure out what to do.



Brother L'Hommedieu is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Sacerdotal Order of the Universal Life and serves on the Board of Directors of the International Universal Life Church, Inc.

Churches enjoy certain other tax benefits over the common man on the street. For instance, a church can legally buy and sell real estate or stocks and bonds completely tax free. It can receive tax free income from bank deposits or mortgages. Many churches own large publishing, recording, or other related businesses like hospitals, clinics and schools without paying any income tax.

A church can sponsor any kind of fund raising event such as a concert, play or even bingo. Churches are also exempt from paying inheritance taxes. When the pastor of the church dies, the Board of Directors simply appoints a new pastor and the church goes on.

Reverend Hensley has stated that he personally doesn't believe in the tax exempt status of churches. However, if the government is going to give a free ride to Billy Graham and the Pope, then why not let everybody participate in these blessings. Furthermore, he backs his words up by offering to defend in court the tax exempt status of his congregations.

Since the church was founded in 1962, it has attracted members who are movie and TV personalities, businessmen, government officials, lawyers, and doctors as well as all types of regular working people. During the last 15 years the Universal Life church has blossomed into a full blown grass roots populace movement. Reverend Hensley is ordaining ten thousand new ministers a week and predicts that the church will have over 20,000,000 members by the early 1980's. In addition, requests for interviews and TV appearances continue to pour in.

Anyone who is a member of the ULC will tell you that the ULC is destined to change the world. By unifying mankind into a brotherhood of freedom orientated individuals, each respecting the other's right to live life as they see fit, the Universal Life Church hopes to put an end to all wars. Reverend Hensley admits that this is a pretty monumental task to accomplish, but he also points out that he is already well on the way to reaching his goal.

Rev. Hensley invites all those interested in becoming an ordained minister and receiving complete information and Minister's Credentials, to send a 10^{00} tax deductible donation to the Universal Life Church, 1335 Seabright Ave., Dept. 278, Santa Cruz, CA 95062

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independent, perhaps even a good and useful, life, but Jadine, for all her pampering, goes back to Europe with the belief that she must be as tough and hard as a soldier ant:

> Almost all of them are women and there is so much to do—the work is literally endless. . . . There is no time for dreaming. The life of their world requires organization so tight and sacrifice so complete there is little need for males and they are seldom produced.

The very end of this novel, like the finale of *Song of Solomon*, reverts to fable. In his pursuit of Jadine, Son is taken by an island woman, not to the Street's dock, but to the dangerous shores of Isle des Chevaliers where it is said the men run naked and blind. "Choose them," the woman says—as opposed to the impossibilities of a mature life with Jadine. The land seems to receive him and Morrison writes:

> He threw out his hands to guide and steady his going. By and by he walked steadier, now steadier. The mist lifted and the trees stepped back a bit as if to make the way easier for a certain kind of man. Then he ran. Lickety-split. Lickety-split. Looking neither to the left nor to the right. Lickety-split. Lickety-split. Lickety-lickety-lickety split.

I can only presume that this storybook language means that Son is swallowed up in that childish world of magic, returned to a natural state. Sadly, the black hero perpetuates myth.

Morrison is easy in her pursuit of big themes: the mutual responsibility of parents and children, the debts we must pay in order to gain a validity and those we must walk away from in order to gain freedom. And, of course, her talent for the comic serves her well in dealing with blacks and whites, maids and masters—drawing the ironic parallels between private and cultural guilt that must haunt us all. For all the fantasy in *Tar Baby*, it is a highly realistic novel, full of the actual riddles, the unanswerable questions, of our present lives. The solutions that tie the Streets and their black servants to a crumbling dream house are hardly soothing. For Jadine and Son, there are no clear answers, only Morrison's observation of their difficult human choices.

Despite its meandering commentaries, despite some stylistic excesses, this is an admirable novel. Witty and desperate, for the most part *Tar Baby* is as carefully patterned as a well-written poem. As I unwind the thematic strands in this review, I realize that much of my pleasure has been in construing this moving and intricate plot, a pleasure I associate with the best kind of reading. *Tar Baby* is a good American novel in which we can discern a new lightness and brilliance in Toni Morrison's enchantment with language and in her curiously polyphonic stories that echo life.

Maureen Howard

Maureen Howard is a novelist currently teaching at Amherst College.

The Great Nosology Debate

Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis by Ronald Bayer

(Basic Books; $12.95)

In May 1970 a group of homosexual men and women disrupted the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in San Francisco. At a panel on transsexualism one of the demonstrators called Irving Bieber, author of a classic psychoanalytic study of homosexuality, a motherfucker—a richly appropriate epithet in view of Bieber's theories about homosexuality. Another panel ended with the protestors shouting, "We've listened to you, now you listen to us." Some of the psychiatrists were so enraged that they demanded a refund of their air fares to San Francisco.

The scene had its counterparts in the black, feminist, and antiwar movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. The main difference with the gays was the peculiar nature of the issue over which homosexuals and psychiatrists came to grief: the fight was not about material considerations, but about perceptions. The issue at stake was whether or not homosexuality should be classified as a mental disease. To be sure, the conviction that homosexuality was pathological had served to justify the therapeutic efforts of psychiatrists, efforts that were often inhumane, as in the "aversive conditioning techniques" used to transform homosexuals into heterosexuals. But only a tiny minority of the homosexual population had been subject to such futile tortures, and, in any case, no observer of the controversy could fail to note that the issue of therapy was altogether secondary. The anger of homosexuals stemmed mainly from the insult to their humanity posed by psychiatry: it was not what psychiatrists did to them, but what they said about them. The protesters saw a direct link between psychiatric nosology (the classification of diseases) and American society's prejudicial attitude toward homosexuals. And they saw an equally direct link between that nosology and the self-image of homosexuals. The threat of disorder and violence—in San Francisco and at subsequent meetings of the APA—was a glorious testimony to the power of ideas.

The events of 1970 marked the beginning of a three-year controversy within the APA over the status of homosexuality. Ronald Bayer has now written a lucid, succinct, and eminently fair-minded account of the controversy, which resulted in the removal of homosexuality from the Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders*. It is largely a story of internal squabbling, influenced, of course, by the persistent threat of outside attack by angry homosexuals. It is also a story full of comic potential, reminding one alternately of a university tenure decision and a set-to among medieval scholastic philosophers.

The deletion of homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (known as *DSM-II*—it being the 1968 revision of a document originally issued in 1952) was effected by a vote of the board of trustees of the APA on December 15, 1973, but not before the proposed change had been inspected and approved by the following bodies: the Nomenclature Committee, the Council on Research and Development, the Assembly of District Branches, and the Reference Committee. One might have thought that would suffice, but the opponents of the "diagnostic shift"

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formed an Ad Hoc Committee Against the Deletion of Homosexuality from *DSM-II* and forced the board's decision to a referendum by the entire membership of the association. The board was upheld by a vote of 5,854 to 3,810.

In the meantime the attempt to find a diagnostic replacement had inspired an exercise in high scholasticism. The earliest contender was "sexual dysfunction," but that proved too vague and tendentious and soon lost out to "sexual orientation disturbance," which came down to "gays who don't like being gay." Although voted into existence by the board of 1973, its reign was brief. By 1977 it was routed, first by "homodysphilia" (or "dishomophilia"—the author is uncharacteristically inconsistent here), then by "homosexual conflict disorder," and finally by "ego-dystonic homosexuality," which ensconced itself as the new orthodoxy in *DSM-III* (issued in 1978) and came down to "gays who want to be straight." Ronald Bayer charts this story with unfailing patience and humor.

The assumption underlying the story—the assumption of the psychiatrists, of the gays who opposed them, and, apparently, of Bayer as well—holds that the opinions of official psychiatry about homosexuality have significantly influenced the experience of homosexuals in our century. It is, I would suggest, a highly dubious assumption and certainly one that neither party to the controversy has succeeded in validating. To do so would entail a large and careful study of the history of attitudes. Moreover, there are reasons for thinking that intellectual and moral forces predating the rise of psychiatry, above all Christianity, have exercised an immeasurably greater influence on the circumstances of homosexuals—although in the wake of John Boswell's study of medieval ideas about homosexuality, one must qualify that proposition by specifying Christianity since the 13th century. I find it hard to believe that the attitudes of society toward homosexuals and of homosexuals toward themselves would have been significantly more wholesome had there never been a Sigmund Freud or a psychiatric profession. Frequently, of course, those homosexuals involved in the struggle against psychiatry were in fact its victims, because they came from the social classes where the teachings of psychiatry had, if not replaced the older moral traditions, at least supplemented them. But for the vast majority of homosexuals in this country Freud has counted for nothing against the Bible.

The practical impotence of psychiatry can also be measured in terms of the effects of the diagnostic shift. Who is willing to argue—let alone demonstrate—that the lives of homosexuals have been substantially altered by the removal of homosexuality from *DSM-II*? Even allowing that gesture every conceivable symbolic resonance, where does one see its results? Before 1973 I had never heard of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, and I had only the vaguest impression that psychiatry entertained fixed opinions about homosexuality. On the other hand, I had no doubt that homosexuality was considered morally reprehensible, and that homosexuals hid their identity not out of fear of the psychiatric profession (which, as Bayer rightly notes, was generally regarded as an ally), but because of overwhelming public disgust. The disgust was so elemental that it didn't have to be expressed, save in the form of dirty jokes. The emergence of that disgust into the public arena in the late 1970s—in the form of campaigns against gay rights legislation—represented not a throwback to older opinions, but the explicit formulation of ideas long felt to be so self-evident that they stood in no need of articulation. The controversy with the APA was an elite sideshow in this larger historical circus, and its main significance probably lay in furthering the development of an oppositional consciousness among some members of the homosexual community.

Bayer properly sees his story, in large part, as a matter of intellectual history. Accordingly, the first half of his book is devoted to an analysis of the antagonistic intellectual traditions that fueled the controversy of 1970-73. Those traditions might be called the psychiatric and the anti-psychiatric.

The history of the first, he shows, is at once ironic and dispiriting. The irony stems from a discrepancy between psychiatry's original motives and its ultimate fate. In its early years—with the best conscience in the world—it perceived itself as the homosexual's friend. It sought to rescue homosexuals from the accusation of vice by placing them under the protective umbrella of disease. This had immediately practical benefits for homosexuals, since they could no longer be treated as criminals, and it also helped to soothe their guilt-

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ridden consciences. Best of all, there was the prospect of heterosexual conversion through therapy.

The dispiriting part of the story, in Bayer's presentation, is the striking decline in moral and intellectual quality as the psychiatric tradition passed from its founder, Freud, through such epigones as Sandor Rado and Irving Bieber, and finally into the hands of a low-comic villain like Charles Socarides. Freud was both the smartest and the most humane of psychiatrists. He stressed the bisexual constitution of all human beings, he opposed the notion that homosexuality was a disease or that it disqualified a person as a therapist, and he remained circumspect about its causes and pessimistic about the chances of therapeutic conversion. Rado, Bieber, and Socarides, by contrast, grew dogmatic and flat-footed where Freud had been cautious and nuanced. Rado rejected the theory of universal bisexuality and thus abolished the psychological tie between homosexuals and heterosexuals posited by Freud. Bieber argued that homosexuality was almost invariably caused by an identifiable family constellation consisting of a strong mother and a distant father. And Socarides, against Freud, insisted that nearly half of all homosexuals are psychotic.

When one reads the psychiatric literature on homosexuality, one can only marvel at the capacity of grown men and women to ignore the evidence staring them in the face. An acquaintance with even a handful of homosexuals—and only the most desultory knowledge of their history—gives the lie to all the psychiatrists' doctrines. Thus anyone who has bothered to pay attention will know that the mental health of homosexuals is not markedly different from that of heterosexuals, that the origin of their sexual orientation is profoundly mysterious and resists every effort to reduce it to a neat formula (à la Bieber), and that a homosexual convert to heterosexuality is as rare and fragile a creature as the black-footed ferret. Indeed, I don't think I've seen a walking example of either.

The anti-psychiatric tradition, which Bayer traces from Havelock Ellis through Alfred Kinsey down to Thomas Szasz, has liabilities of a different sort. The basic theme of the anti-psychiatrists is that homosexuals differ from heterosexuals in only one respect: in the conduct of their sexual lives. The anti-psychiatrists tend to view homosexuality not as a condition but as a choice. They use evidence from anthropology and animal behavior to dispute the charge of pathology; they demolish the etiologies of Bieber and other psychoanalysts by showing the hopeless bias of the sample on which those etiologies are based; and they reject the possibility, even the desirability, of heterosexual conversion. Thomas Szasz, certainly the most uncompromising of the anti-psychiatrists, denies psychiatry all competence to pass judgment on what is, for him, a question of morality. From a structural point of view, his position is indistinguishable from Anita Bryant's. With some cogency, he argues that gays have erred in regarding the APA's decision of 1973 as a victory, since to do so implies that the APA is in fact qualified to make such decisions.

The weakness of the anti-psychiatric school is that it also ignores the evidence right in front of it. For just as homosexuality transparently does not constitute a pathology, neither is it no more than a simple sexual preference. Everyone who has thought about the question recognizes that being gay means to be different in ways that transcend what one does in bed. To say how much that difference is a function of the particular circumstances under which homosexuals have lived, and how much it has deeper roots, would be premature. But homosexuality is a complex state of being, complex in its origins, in the range of its manifestations, and in its interaction with specific historical and social conditions. To reduce it to a sexual orientation—although understandable as a political tactic—considerably diminishes its richness and importance. The imaginative literature on homosexuality—both of our own and of previous ages—testifies to that larger reality. The psychiatrists, one might say, have the virtue of insisting on homosexuality's differentness, even while they distort that differentness through the prism of disease. On the whole they are not an attractive lot, but some hint of the truth absent in the bland, up-beat pages of the anti-psychiatrists can be glimpsed in their patronizing and often ignorant analyses.

Homosexuality and American Psychiatry doesn't pretend to identify the truth about homosexuality. But its clear exposition of the two ideological traditions, and their confrontation within the APA in the early 1970s, makes a modest and helpful contribution to our thinking about a difficult subject.

Paul Robinson

Coming:

Christopher Hill

on Blasphemy.

A Classic Rediscovered

Mary Chesnut's Civil War
edited by C. Vann Woodward

(Yale University Press; $29.95)

Those who have read the Civil War "diary" of Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut already know that the familiar stereotype of the vapid, sentimental, somewhat bird-brained antebellum southern lady had at least one glorious exception.

Published first in greatly truncated form in 1905, and then in considerably greater length in 1949 by the novelist Ben Ames Williams, *A Diary from Dixie* (which Mrs. Chesnut herself never called it) has beguiled students of the southern Confederacy for generations. The behind-the-scenes look at the notables in wartime Richmond, the realistic depiction of the soldiers soon to be made into the stainless heroes of the legend of the Lost Cause, the abhorrence of slavery and frankness about some of the implications involved in the ownership of black women, the comic yet ultimately tragic insight into the true meaning of the war for the plantation south have led many a scholar to praise the candor and marvel at the insight of this South Carolina matron.

The standards of modern textual

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scholarship, however, have not until now been applied to the "diary" of Mary Chesnut. Now Professor C. Vann Woodward, with notable assistance from associates of the Southern Studies Program at the University of South Carolina where the manuscripts are housed, has produced a version of the work that is far more faithful to what Mrs. Chesnut actually wrote.

It turns out that the "diary" was not a diary at all. It was not written down day-to-day from 1861 to 1865. Mrs. Chesnut kept a private journal for portions of the war years, then in the 1880s she revised, developed, greatly augmented, excised, and rewrote several versions. It was principally the last of these that was presented in 1905 and 1949 as authentic, on-the-spot wartime observations. Thus the polish and vividness which led critics to marvel at Mrs. Chesnut's intuitive skill at recording events was not unretouched journalizing at all, but very much the texture of a "written" literary work. The word "diary" is misleading; it is not that, but a memoir presented chronologically.

Mary Chesnut was the wife of a South Carolina planter-politician, James Chesnut Jr., who resigned his seat in the United States Senate when his state seceded. Because of his subsequent distinguished career his wife was on hand for the formation of the Confederate government in Montgomery, Alabama, and for the firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. She was in Richmond at the time of the battle of First Manassas, and again in 1863 and 1864, and was in upcountry South Carolina when Sherman's marauding forces came through in 1865. She knew almost everybody of importance in the Confederate war effort, and commented on the famous, the infamous, and the ordinary. She was an intimate friend of Varina Davis, and both the Chesnuts were strong supporters of the beleaguered Confederate president.

It is impossible to summarize briefly the richness, the virtuosity, and the humanity of her candid portrayal of what she saw of the warring south and its citizenry. She was witty, and she loved the goings-on of society, often vexing her rather staid husband by her zest for social life. Plantation life in South Carolina bored and depressed her; she relished the excitement of the cities. From the outset she sensed that, win or lose, slavery and the privileged life of the plantation elite were doomed. She regretted the latter, but she rejoiced at the former. "God forgive us," she wrote in 1861, "but ours is a *monstrous* system of wrong and iniquity." If anything could reconcile her to the failure of the Confederacy, she wrote, it was Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

She derived satisfaction from the thought that black people henceforth could no longer be owned as animals, while her world was falling to pieces around her, and even while she lamented the death of so many soldiers who were dear to her. Yet at the same time she was a fervent Confederate patriot, who despised those who caviled and croaked, and the south's fight for political independence was passionately her own. (Anyone who sees this as contradictory is probably incapable of understanding southern history.)

On another subject, the role and place of women, she held views as militant as the most ardent latter-day feminist. Women, she insisted, were held as slaves equally with blacks; she generally saw her own sex as repressed, abused, forced to give way to masculine vanity and complacency at all times in a fiercely patriarchal society. Her remarks on the existence of miscegenation are scorching. "Like the patriarchs of old," she wrote in the 1861 journal, "our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think." Miss Rosa Coldfield in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* could express no greater outrage. Yet she was deeply in love with her own husband, and that love was reciprocated; she did not think him guilty of such conduct.

Professor Woodward quotes liberally from the 1861 journal to prove that this remarkable woman did not insert such advanced views into her 1880s memoir so as to pretend to a prescience she did not possess in the war years. Mary Chesnut wrote down what she thought, in most instances after saying it aloud to her often-shocked acquaintances. She thought of herself as Cassandra, prophesying doom, and so she was; but a sensible, witty, often merry prophet. She understood the frantic quality of her good humor and joy in social doings, as when she remarked of the Carolina

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scholars...cosmologists...scoundrels

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gentry who were preparing to fire on Fort Sumter in 1861: "Our hearts are in doleful dumps. And we are as gay, as madly jolly, as the sailors who break into the strong room as the ship is going down."

This new, annotated, and accurate edition of Mary Chesnut's memoir is to earlier versions as the complete, annotated Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is to a pocket-sized abridgment; the earlier volumes gave us highlights, but here is the rich and full context, as the author herself recreated it. It is by all odds the best of all Civil War memoirs, and one of the most remarkable eyewitness accounts to emerge from that or any other war. And if one may say so, it is what Mary Chesnut intended it to be: a tribute to her people.

Louis D. Rubin Jr.

Louis D. Rubin Jr., a native of Charleston, South Carolina, is University Distinguished Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Literary Politics, Soviet Style

Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky, and Novy Mir
by Vladimir Lakshin
translated and edited by Michael Glenny

(MIT Press; $10)

Vladimir Lakshin was the chief critic of the journal *Novy Mir* (New World) and the closest associate of its editor, Alexander Tvardovsky, when it published, in November 1962, Solzhenitsyn's short novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The editors who performed the feat of bringing to light that revelation of the Stalinist prison camps have a right to be proud of their achievement, and of having attended at the birth in print of a new and powerful literary force. Lakshin in this book asserts their claim to credit and defends himself and Tvardovsky against the "slanderous caricature" of them, and of the editorial board as a whole, which he finds in Solzhenitsyn's *The Oak and the Calf*, first published in Paris in 1974, and now in English translation (Harper & Row). There's no doubt that Lakshin and some of the editors of *Novy Mir* are aggrieved parties who have suffered contumely at the hands of Solzhenitsyn, and Lakshin's effort to set the record straight, to enter a defense for those who cannot defend themselves, is admirable. His book has great poignancy and power chiefly because it tells how sharper than a serpent's tooth it was to suffer unjust attack from one who had been their pride and joy.

In order to evaluate Lakshin's defense and to approach certain broader issues raised in its confrontation with *The Oak*, one must consider the latter carefully. That book, one of Solzhenitsyn's greatest literary achievements, is an account of a lone writer's courageous, unremitting struggle against one of the powers of darkness, with all its policemen, its armies and navies, and its thousands of nuclear weapons. Like all of Solzhenitsyn's works it purports to investigate and portray the reality of Russian experience in the 20th century, in this case the reality of the Soviet literary world, and is therefore a kind of historical document. But in this book the historically real personages figure as agents in a fateful struggle between God and his enemies, a struggle in which Solzhenitsyn is the chosen instrument of the former. The result is that the people, some of them still living, who take part as actors in this mighty drama play out their parts in a way that transcends the literal and the biographically factual. This has led to some misunderstanding, and naturally to unhappiness on the part of those who figure as evil grotesques in Solzhenitsyn's great Passion play. We must also bear in mind that in its literary style Solzhenitsyn's book is, as one critic put it, "a discovery of the Russian language," and its artistic power is also the effect of a carefully crafted colloquial idiom whose fierce mimicry brings to life an array of characters, some of them banal and evil, others brutish and dull, many of them frightened and accommodating to evil (the *Novy Mir* editors, for instance, and one of them an immensely fascinating human being, the poet and editor Tvardovsky. Solzhenitsyn's most serious reproach against Lakshin and the editorial board is that at every critical point they urged caution and compromise upon Tvardovsky in order to "save the journal at all costs." Lakshin replies that it was worth saving—and that's the matter at issue.

Quite understandably Lakshin attends less to Solzhenitsyn's superlative literary achievement than to his own grievance, and this to some extent vitiates his case against it. For instance he quarrels with the subtitle of *The Oak and the Calf*, "Sketches of Literary Life": "The book contains nothing about literature except the works of Solzhenitsyn himself, and nothing about life except what is immediately linked with his own. . . ." But of course the subtitle, which carries the aroma of a hackneyed Soviet literary genre, is ironic. *The Oak* tells about the life of a writer who must hide what he writes from the police, protect every source and helper from the threat of incarceration, squirrel away a magnum opus until "the proper time," outwit, outflank, and defeat the enemies of literature, who, in the Soviet Union, happen also to be its tutors and publishers. Literary life, indeed!

Lakshin is insensitive also to Solzhenitsyn's portrait of the central character in *The Oak*, Alexander Tvardovsky, declaring himself outraged and offended by it: "In *The Oak and the Calf* he has insulted the memory of a man who was very dear to me, whom I regarded as a second father. . . ." But there is no such insult in *The Oak*. At one point Lakshin himself acknowledges that "many people who have read this book have expressed the opinion that despite the slurs cast upon him by Solzhenitsyn, Tvardovsky emerges from it as a strong and attractive figure." Indeed he does, and many people—the present writer included—would deny that any slur at all is cast upon him. Tvardovsky in *The Oak* is a powerful but flawed figure: he was honestly devoted both to the party and to Russian literature. Because it was impossible to serve those two masters at one time, he suffered an insoluble inner conflict, one that drove him to alcoholic indulgence extraordinary even for a Russian. Far from pillorying him for his alcoholism, as Lakshin contends, Solzhenitsyn understands and sympathizes; he points out that, harassed

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every day as he was by illiterate official dwarfs wielding police power, Tvardovsky found his solace in drink: "For thirty years what had he had except vodka to help him shed that vexing, scalding, shameful and bootless tension? Just cast a stone at him after that." (Solzhenitsyn is of course unfair to the other members of the *Novy Mir* board in that he says not a word of their similar problems.) Lakshin implies that Solzhenitsyn missed the remarkable evolution in Tvardovsky's views; as a matter of fact the central motif of *The Oak* is Tvardovsky's suffering, uncertain movement toward resolution of his inner conflict. The Tvardovsky who emerges in the final "movement" of *The Oak*, the man who supports Solzhenitsyn's brilliant and devastating Open Letter to the board of the Writers' Union and who regularly listens to the BBC, is very different from the Stalin-prize laureate and power-conscious Soviet bureaucrat we met in the opening scenes. With overtones of agony and grief Solzhenitsyn unfolds the story of Tvardovsky's gradual reduction to impotence as editor of *Novy Mir*, his forced resignation, and his death. "There are many ways of killing a poet," he says. "They killed Tvardovsky when they took *Novy Mir* away from him." The human tragedy Solzhenitsyn found in Tvardovsky's life story, which Lakshin doesn't see, is one of Solzhenitsyn's finest pieces of writing.

Lakshin is unfair in other ways. He accuses Solzhenitsyn of excessive secretiveness where the context clearly points only to clandestine deceit of the KGB. He quotes from *The Oak* out of context, which causes him, among other inaccuracies, to misrepresent a very important scene. Solzhenitsyn tells of the end of the last day of *Novy Mir*, when all the top brass had gone forever and the "small fry," unable to bring themselves to leave, gathered in Tvardovsky's empty office for some final drinks. No one sat at Tvardovsky's desk but they poured a drink and set it there for him. Then one of the minor employees spoke a line of poetry which should not have puzzled anyone with an ear attuned to Russian literature: "Let's forgive him his unjust persecutions." To this Lakshin puts the banal and literal question: "What meaning, when applied to Tvardovsky, can this misquotation from Pushkin possibly have? Which employee ever suffered from 'persecution' by Tvardovsky?" The line spoken is from a celebratory poem on Pushkin's alma mater, the *Lycee*, in which the poet celebrates among others Alexander I, who founded the school and then later sent Pushkin himself into exile. The next line, which should have resonated for Lakshin though it is not quoted, is a profound tribute to the Czar, who, whatever else he had done: "Captured Paris and founded the *Lycee*." Clearly the minor employee who said that was offering honest tribute to Tvardovsky as a man who, with all his faults, arrogant and dictatorial as he was at times, had accomplished wonderful things. Lakshin misses the effect of a beautifully moving and tightly written scene. I dwell on these matters, and many more could be adduced, in order to show that Lakshin, himself smarting from Solzhenitsyn's attack, does less than justice to *The Oak*, and it is well to set that record straight, too.

This confrontation of two books can be fully appreciated only when it is placed in its Russian and Soviet context. When Lakshin and other friends of *Novy Mir* accuse Solzhenitsyn of black ingratitude to Tvardovsky, the man who "discovered" and befriended him, they are urging upon us standards of "gratitude" more suitable to a feudal society or a modern analog of feudalism than to a society based on intercourse among free and equal men. Solzhenitsyn acknowledges no fealty to Tvardovsky as his lord, master, and protector (nor as his "second father"), and why should he? He was obligated only to give Tvardovsky works of high literary quality and to treat him with respect; having done that his debt was fully discharged. Nor did "fealty" oblige him to soften the contours or touch up the rough spots (of which there are many) in his portrait of Tvardovsky. Lakshin and some others betray in the most innocent and unsuspecting manner the effect of Soviet conditioning, of the attitude that the lone individual, having no assured rights in law or custom, has a special need for and owes a sacred debt to his patron and benefactor. Those who object to the dark colors in the portrait betray an expectation that someone they admired and revered as a patron or a "father" will be presented to history as a kind of icon, worthy to hang on the wall next to the great Russian critic Belinsky, the profoundly bearded Tolstoy, the "sainted" Pushkin, and even Lenin.

The mark of Soviet ways of life is on the polemic which, at the present writing, is in full swing in the West. Neither of these two works is notable for sensitivity to character and reputation, nor does either readily admit the possibility of decent motivation in an opponent. Solzhenitsyn regards the members of the *Novy Mir* editorial board as spineless creatures always restraining the honest impulses of the editor-in-chief, terrified

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At seventeen I should have asked boyfriends
who hunted squirrels and then stewed
spindly legs, to name the barn's colors.
They had clear words for God, but slurred *orchard*,
lisped *death*. I never heard them say *red barn*.
Watching through August nights with them,
I knew the red barn blocked the breeze,
the lights from town, that now the barn was black.
Oh it was a colorless, lightless world
they walked themselves and gear right through.
There wasn't much to say. We lay for hours
in the heart's holes, in the blown cores
of space, until it seemed like calm
when the wordless hum stopped in the mind.

Janet Kauffman

lest he "go too far" and take a chance on "wrecking the journal," ready to sacrifice anything you like as long as nobody "made any waves" or rocked them in their "comfortable editorial chairs." Lakshin totally forfeited his respect by joining the party in 1966, the year of Sinyavsky and Daniel, an action not forgivable and beyond understanding. It can easily be shown that *Novy Mir* managed to publish a number of writers who added something to Russian literature, but Solzhenitsyn regards all of that as nothing in comparison with what should have been done. It is just because *Novy Mir* managed to function as a "loyal opposition" that it has incurred his wrath. How can a decent man be "loyal" in any sense to the enemy? And Lakshin is at least equally absolute and final in rejecting Solzhenitsyn: "So let there be an end to restraint: The time has come to settle accounts and say farewell on this earth forever, or at all events until in some future age, under another sky and on another shore, someone whose justice is beyond question may be the arbiter of our dispute."

Both books betray the mark of their formation in a specific culture, one in which issues in dispute are maximized and the ground of accommodation tends to disappear. The Soviet semiotician Boris Uspensky identified this characteristic of Russian culture—both early and late—as a kind of spiritual dualism operating exclusively with binary, either-or, models, and lacking any area of neutral balance—the "purgatory" of Western religious culture, for instance. If the whole universe is divided into "good" and "evil," sacred and profane, with no intermediate ground, then the notion of a "loyal opposition" can only be a trick and a deception.

Lakshin deals unfairly with *The Oak and the Calf*, but he does make some just and pointed comments on Solzhenitsyn himself, that consummate artist now turned prophet. Speaking of Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* he writes: "This typically amateurish, fragmented, improvised political thinking is yet another consequence of a do-it-yourself education. Never having been able to make a systematic study of philosophy, history, or sociology, Solzhenitsyn is convinced that on the strength of his admittedly exceptional abilities he can simply leap over all difficulties in any branch of knowledge." Since Solzhenitsyn joined us in the West we have learned that he not only rejects the ideology of "socialism" root, branch, and poisoned fruit, but also rejects any democratic social organization in favor of some kind of vaguely articulated patriarchal and religious, authoritarian utopia. He finds abhorrent our politics, our culture, and our pluralistic society, and undertakes, ignorant though he is of our life, to lecture us fatuously on important matters.

By any rational standard such behavior ought to be shocking in a literary artist, but in a Russian writer it is understandable, almost pardonable, especially in a Soviet writer who has "scraped and clawed his way up" out of the concentration camps to a position of fame and great honor. "In Russia," Solzhenitsyn once said, "the writer is a second government," and that remark goes far to explain him. In the 19th century, writers were regarded as repositories of the national conscience and were expected to "speak out" on great issues; the question of their competence never came up. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, each in his prophet's mantle, were only extreme examples of this peculiarly Russian attitude, a belated demonstration of which we are now witnessing in the behavior of Solzhenitsyn. In his native context he is less astonishing than he is outside of it.

Lakshin does give credit to Solzhenitsyn where credit is undoubtedly due. He honors the author of *Gulag* not only as a great literary talent, but for the enormous service he performed, the effects of which are still felt in the Soviet Union and beyond its borders. Lakshin writes:

> Whatever he may have said, and whatever we may think of it, it was bold, daring, destructive, and it answered our unspoken need for someone to raise his voice on our behalf. He has avenged our humiliation, our silence, our acquiescence, our compromises with our conscience. He spoke when we were dumb.

Perhaps we should say of Solzhenitsyn, paraphrasing that anonymous minor editor who did honor to the departed Tvardovsky: "Let's forgive him his arrogant absurdities."

Edward J. Brown

Edward J. Brown is professor of Slavic languages and literature at the University of California, Berkeley.

Brief Reviews

Unreliable Memoirs by Clive James

(Knopf; $10)

Clive James, who was really Vivian James until he "picked Clive out of a Tyrone Power movie," was only six years old when World War II ended. Yet his memoirs of growing up in Australia evoke a homefront atmosphere of hardship, survival, and loss. The loss was that of a father he never knew: the elder James was captured by the Japanese in Malaya, and served out the war as a POW in Japan, only to be killed returning to Australia when his plane went down in a typhoon.

There is sadness in this account of James's childhood and adolescence, but there is also an acute sense of the ridiculous both in himself and in the world that bred him, on the suburban frontier

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between Sydney and the bush. That comic sense, bound up with a pathos that is never mawkish, makes this a moving and funny book.

By his own account, James was a difficult child and his mother a candidate for martyrdom. He was spoiled early, given to tantrums, fears, and accidents. Near the towns of Kogarah and Jannali, on the outskirts of Sydney, were enough snakes and spiders and forbidding desert wastes to make a writer out of anyone. The young James was a failure—as a Cub Scout, a student, an athlete, an office boy, and a streetcar conductor. He covered up his feelings of loneliness and inferiority by being funny. Slowly, painfully, he succumbed to the ravages of adolescence and adulthood: the mysterious magic of love and sex, responsibility, and books. A war orphans' scholarship got him admitted to Sydney University, where his emergence from innocence reached classic proportions. ("What kind of car, I wondered, was a Ford Madox Ford?")

During the next few years, he became a literate hanger-on of the Sydney bohemian set; conscript in the National Service; book reviewer; and finally, passenger on a ship bound for England, where he now resides. Needless to say, he can't go home again.

There is something of Tom Sawyer in the early Clive James, and not a little Mark Twain in the writer of this book. If it seems that a 41-year-old critic has no business writing memoirs, one only has to read a page of these and all is forgiven. Besides, they don't claim to be reliable—only true.

Jeffrey Scheuer

Jeffrey Scheuer is a New York writer.

Young Emma
by W. H. Davies

(George Braziller; $9.95)

When W. H. Davies appeared on the English literary scene at the turn of this century, it seemed as though he had stepped out of a rustic Romantic poem or perhaps a low-life scene in a Shakespeare play. He had one wooden leg, a rough accent, and artlessly naive verses to show as well as a wayward past to recount. Davies began life in bucolic poverty in 1871 and became a tramp as soon as he was old enough to set out on his own. He begged his way back and forth across America for six years (losing a leg as he hopped a train) and then returned to his homeland for several more years of the same, reading all the while and then suddenly discovering there was poetry in his soul. Peddling his new poetic wares, he caught the attention of George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Symons, and others, who saw to it that favorable notices began to appear. The literary figure of the "Tramp-poet" was an entrancing one—an "idyllic idol, an inspired natural, a poetic Peter Pan," one critic wrote. The actual human character within was more mysterious. Just how mysterious is suggested by this short memoir, which none of his contemporaries except his publisher, Jonathan Cape, and G. B. Shaw ever got a chance to read, and which Braziller has published for the first time.

It tells the outlandish tale of how Davies took himself a wife in his 50th year. He wrote the account in 1924, two years after the odd wooing and wedding, dispatched it to his publisher, and then decided not to publish it, for fear of alarming "young Emma," his bride. (His publisher was more worried about alarming refined society.) Though Davies had been traveling in London literary circles for more than 20 years, charming the company and apparently enjoying himself, he found it "much more natural" to return to his tramping ways in his matrimonial search. "I made up my mind to trouble no more about respectable women," he declares at the beginning of the memoir, "but to find a wife in the common streets." In the same forthright, slightly archaic style in which he makes this announcement, he proceeds to tell the story of "how it was done"—how he found a thieving mistress on one corner one night, kept her for a few weeks; found a gentler woman on another stroll; and then at last on a different evening succeeded in his quest to "get one woman as a life-time companion." He caught the eye and returned the smile of Emma, 23 years old, the sweetest and most trusting of all. She happily trotted home after him, became his "housekeeper" and devoted companion; she showered him with kisses, Davies reports, and called him first "Dear Old Funny Cuts," then "Bunnykins." But most of their odd courtship

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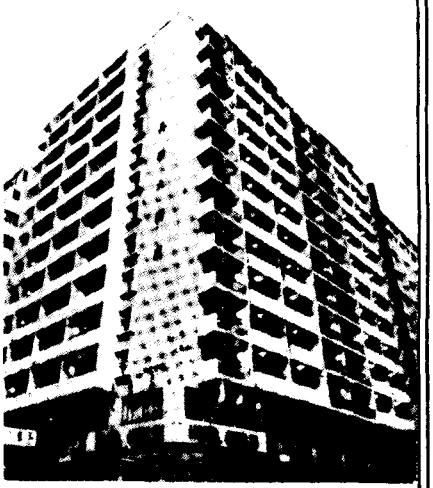

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was less cozy. Together they weathered her painful miscarriage of a baby which she conceived with another man, and his agonizing bout with veneral disease, which he contracted from another woman. At last they moved from his small flat in London to the "green country," where they married and lived happily and reclusively ever after, Davies until his death in 1940, Emma until hers two years ago.

Altogether this is a perplexing document. The facts of the bizarre marriage are stated plainly enough, but the man who recounts them remains a baffling character, despite his gestures toward self-revelation. As Shaw remarked in his letter to Jonathan Cape, the manuscript shows the signs of "a fully developed, vigorous, courageous, imaginative, and specifically talented adult" at work crafting words, a story, and a tone. Yet at the same time it betrays "the outlook of a slum boy of six or seven," a boy who chats cheerily about disease and poverty and thinks unabashedly about marriage in terms of a practical deal: security from loneliness for himself, safety from the streets for his partner. How much is true simplicity and how much disingenuousness on the part of this curious man, we can wonder but never know. *Young Emma* presents the kind of intriguing psychological mystery that is a rarity these days, when publishers make sure their authors tell all during their lifetime, and TV hosts then invite them to explain. And unlike so many sensational outpourings now, this one has far more in common with a strange and captivating short story than with a soap opera.

Ann Hulbert

Correspondence, *from page 3*

Non-Jews, of course, never have affairs. Nor do they, according to Bernays, enjoy the "physical delights of blonde, snub-nosed women." Here is the ancient foul projection of the Jew as devil *par excellence*. Julius Streicher must be bestowing a beatific smile upon Bernays from his war criminal's grave. I must assume that the editors knew full well what they allowed to be put in print by this classic anti-Semitic diatribe. They must even have expected responses like my own and weighed their value in terms of circulation.

As a minister and a psychologist I protest the mental contagion to which you have lent yourselves.

Matthew Spetter
Bronx, New York

To the editors:
The next time you publish an anti-Semitic, anti-male article such as the sophomoric piece by Anne Bernays, please warn me ahead of time. Perhaps you could do something subtle like placing a castrated penis or the slogan *Juden sind unsere Ungluck* on the cover; then I would not have to endure such vicious self-righteousness with my breakfast. Bernays's blanket denunciations of supposedly Jewish traits (such as WASP adulation and a longing for "blonde, snub-nosed *shiksas*") is adolescently Portnoyish at best and racist at worst. The publication of such a piece must reflect self-hatred and a distorted sense of guilt on the part of the editors; I can't see you liberals tolerating similar slanders against blacks or Hispanics.

Henry Lerner, MD
Newton, Massachusetts

Antidote to the supply side

To the editors:
Robert Reich's "The Liberal Promise of Prosperity" (*TNR*, February 21) is an absolutely first-class antidote to the supply-side nonsense currently in vogue. This is the sort of essay that partially reconciles me to the oddities of *TNR*'s analysis of foreign affairs and its hospitality to paladins of the hard right like Robert Moss, Arnaud de Borchgrave, and Michael Ledeen to whom the admirable Ronald Steel is only a partial antidote.

Robert Lekachman
Lehman College, CUNY
Bronx, New York

Apartheid in the US

To the editors:
Although the parallels are obviously strong and worthy of investigation between our treatment of black Afro-Americans and South African history, I could not help wondering as I read Nathan Irvin Huggins's review of George M. Fredrickson's *White Supremacy* (*TNR*, February 21), whether they both missed an important and potentially more revealing comparison. The blacks in the US are immigrants, albeit unwilling, just as are the whites. The native population was the Indian nation. Might not the parallels in treatment of native populations be more informative? We (i.e., the whites) solved our "coloreds" problem by large-scale extermination, followed by forced isolation on reservations. I wonder at our "Enlightenment ideology about the rights of man" as it applied to Indians. Certainly we practiced and still practice apartheid toward that great people.

Harlan L. Lewis
Bloomington, Indiana

Monitoring the Soviets

To the editors:
Tad Szulc ("Deciphering the Russians," *TNR*, February 21) somewhat overstates the potential difficulties created for US verification of Soviet missile testing by the loss of the Iranian intelligence installations. Indeed, US intelligence agencies would face insurmountable problems if they attempted to monitor ICBM tests originating at the Plesetsk test center by looking at the area "between the Caspian and Aral seas, northwest of the city of Bukhara," the location given by Szulc. Plesetsk, used by the Soviets for operational test launches of fully developed ICBMs and occasionally for space shots, is in fact located far to the north of Moscow, just south of the White Sea. Launches from Plesetsk can best be monitored from the Barents Sea. The loss of the Iranian surveillance posts greatly complicates the task of verifying Central Asian missile testing, but does not affect US abilities to monitor activities at Plesetsk.

Dennis Culkin
Washington, DC

Arabs and Africans

To the editors:
George Kane's statement (Traveler's Diarist, *TNR*, February 21) that the "white and occasionally brown Arab settlers in the north" are not true Africans is simply inaccurate. The Arabian conquest of Egypt, the Sudan, and North Africa involved religious subjugation but little transfer of population. The indigenous populations remained. If Kane would venture to look at wall portraits in one of the ancient Theban tombs, he would find the very same Hamitic faces one sees in Egypt today. The Arabs conquered and converted and some did settle, but black Africans were never native to northern Africa.

Robert C. Waggoner
Mountain Lakes, New Jersey

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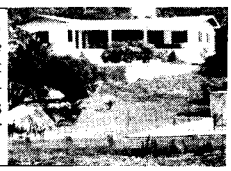

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Washington Diarist

Après moi le déluge

One of my proudest accomplishments as editor of this publication was preventing any discussion in these pages concerning the Law of the Sea Conference. It was not easy to keep a finger in the dike for four years. The Law of the Sea is one of those topics so fascinating that more people wish to write about them than wish to read about them. Other examples include the great warmth and friendship of the Chinese people, as revealed in a visit to parts of the mainland only recently penetrated by Western freelance writers, and Canada: Troubled Neighbor to the North. Now any slighting reference to Canada is bound to produce a flurry of anguished letters, most of them attached to manuscripts. On the other hand, so is any favorable reference to Canada, so it would be futile to add at this point that I think it's a lovely country and we're darned lucky to have it next door, especially considering most of the alternatives. Yet Canada is, for all its acknowledged merits, a nation of assistant professors, each armed with articles designed to "dispel misunderstanding." These literary missiles are aimed at the American media, ready to be fired at the slightest provocation. Those who are themselves transfixed by subjects like Canada and the Law of the Sea (now there's a title) tend to see misunderstanding where there is actually judicious indifference. But mere passive indifference is no protection against a mighty flood of articles. Keeping the Law of the Sea Conference out of a low-lying publication like *TNR* requires a steely lack of interest bordering on autism. Will my successors be up to it? Already I see the tide approaching, and hear the bulwarks beginning to crack.

Washington papers have been filled with illustrations of the "Firemen First Principle," a term coined by Charlie Peters of the *Washington Monthly*. This principle holds that when an agency is threatened with a budget cut, it will immediately announce curtailment of whatever service the public values most. National Public Radio, for example, required exactly 24 hours to determine and inform the *Washington Post* that "All Things Considered," its most popular show, will die unless Congress blocks President Reagan's proposed 25 percent cut in funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Now why, when forced to trim by 25 percent, would NPR start by canceling its most successful show? The answer is, it wouldn't. NPR is bluffing. Oh, perhaps they will cut back on "frills" like commentaries by Morton Kondracke. But the basic "safety net" of news off the wires, interviews with celebrities and experts, reports on quaint goings-on in rural areas, and bubbly musical interludes will be protected. As a consumer of public radio, I would be delighted if "All Things Considered" were canceled. Also "Morning Edition" and "National Town Meeting" and all the other talky-talky that increasingly fills the schedule. This may sound selfish. After all, I can get incisive commentaries anytime I want simply by banging on the wall and yelling, "Hey, Mort! What is the future of liberalism? Is violence on television bad for our children? Does the Moral Majority have a monopoly on righteousness?" and so on. But I suspect that most public radio listeners, like me, primarily want good music (classical and jazz) without commercials and other interruptions. This kind of programing is the least expensive, but also the least glamorous for those involved, which is why there is less of it as NPR's budget, its chic, and its claims on local air time have expanded. Even when NPR does offer music, as in a program called "Recital Hall," it is interlarded with interviews, panel discussions, and other self-aggrandizing distractions. I wonder if they have this problem in China. (No, I don't. Really.)

If you, Mr. or Ms. Average Citizen, wish to publish a pamphlet or distribute a videotape helpful or harmful to a political candidate, you may well find yourself in trouble unless you hire a lawyer, register your "independent campaign expenditure" with the Federal Election Commission, reveal the sources of your money, and so on. Responsible media voices like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* approve highly of this arrangement as a way of limiting the influence of money on politics. In fact, the post-Watergate election reforms originally put a ceiling on independent political expenditures, until the Supreme Court—to the distress of the *Times*, the *Post*, and so on—said this was unconstitutional. So when the FEC nabbed a large corporation, no less, distributing videotapes and other negative material about Chappaquiddick, without registering, while Ted Kennedy was running for president, the *Times* and the *Post* congratulated it on a job well done. Right? Hardly. The FEC is enduring showers of abuse from its high-minded former supporters, because the corporation in question happens to be the *Reader's Digest*, which was promoting an article. The *Reader's Digest* is part of the media, you see, so even making the tiniest preliminary inquiry, which is all the FEC did, violates (drum-roll, please) . . . the First Amendment. The First Amendment, as usually interpreted by the press, says that journalists may rape and pillage as they please, and says nothing about anyone else. The thought that making people jump through 18 hoops before they can express a political opinion might violate the First Amendment never occurred to the *Times* or the *Post* until the FEC dunderheadedly took on another established publication. "It is none of the Government's business what a magazine spends . . . ," thunders the *Times* now. Very true. But when some people questioned the "independent expenditure" regulations back at the beginning in 1975, the *Times* insisted that money is not the same thing as speech, and therefore had no claims on First Amendment protection. The law setting up the FEC specifically exempts the products of "any broadcasting station, newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication" unless owned by a political party, committee, or candidate. The clear purpose is to protect the media from the FEC's ministrations. But who are the media? And why on earth should "the media," whoever they are, be treated differently than lesser mortals who simply wish to express their opinions? It will be amusing to watch as the more sonorous voices of the established press, with rising goo-goo indignation, simultaneously denounce official certification of journalists by UNESCO and demand official certification by the FEC.

M.E.K.

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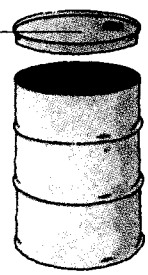
"Almost anything you can make out of anything, you can make with less energy from plastics."

"It's no news that plastics are versatile," says Frank Barborek, Plastics Development Manager at Gulf Oil Chemicals Company. "Even more important perhaps is that plastics are remarkably energy-efficient.



"Petrochemicals use only about 6% of America's crude oil supply, and it's an energy bargain."

"For instance, it takes less energy to make plastic bags instead of paper bags; plastic bottles instead of glass bottles; plastic cans instead of steel cans; plastic auto hoods and trunk lids instead of aluminum.

"Many plastics are lighter than the materials they replace, so they take less energy to ship and handle. And plastic parts can make cars dramatically more fuel-efficient: there's over 230 pounds of plastic in the average late-model car, and each pound of plastic can replace up to six pounds of steel. And of course plastics don't rust.

"Most plastics are based on chemicals from petroleum; and one reason why Gulf is committed to developing other fuel sources, such as tar sands and oil shale, is to maintain a steady supply of petrochemicals for plastics.

"Only about 6% of America's crude oil supply goes into petrochemicals, and the crude oil we turn into energy-efficient plastics helps make the rest of each barrel of oil go farther. That's more energy for tomorrow."

Gulf

Gulf people: energy for tomorrow.

Gulf Oil Corporation

"From houses to toothbrushes, plastics can do almost anything."

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